

“WHERE FOOT KNOCKS AGAINST/THE UNBURIED BONES OF KIN”:
TOPOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY AND AMNESIA IN POLAND AND SPAIN

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies and refashions a critical point of convergence between Poland and Spain's national histories under the umbrella of Holocaust and Memory Studies in its examination of selections from each country's respective canon of film and literature pertaining to the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War. The resistance to literary and visual depictions of wartime memory in Poland and Spain poses a multitude of imperative questions that revolve around the denial of national guilt and the resulting government-sanctioned cultural amnesia. Two such illustrations of institutionalized practices of forgetting are Spain's *pacto de silencio* (pact of silence), imposed after the death of Franco, and Poland's recent law making it a criminal offense to discuss or imply Polish guilt in crimes of the Holocaust, which emerged as a product of a longstanding history of resisting any admission of collaboration or complicity. I will focus primarily on the intersections between the survivor testimony and stories of witness that began to surface both during and in the immediate wake of World War II in Poland and the Spanish Civil War in Spain and more recent depictions of the "black-listed" memory of the Holocaust and crimes of fascist dictatorships in twentieth and twenty first-century literature and film in both countries. It is imperative to identify the traumatic site with which current political bodies will not contend before parsing out issues of exile, transitions into democracy, and intergenerational legacies of shame that lead us back to the present moment at the culmination of the dissertation. The conditions necessary to create political and cultural environments like those described in Poland and Spain are structural, and not unique to any one nation; the fact that these countries have not previously been examined in conjunction with one another lends itself as evidence to the assertion that the active suppression of memory in newly formed democracies is not dependent on national identities. While there are many conditions that pave the way for historical

amnesia to manifest, some fall outside the scope of this project. Therefore, this dissertation addresses only the following conditions: the political fallout in the wake of World War II and the Spanish Civil War, the construction of collective memory spaces within the larger European memory project of the EU to which all member states must subscribe, the influence of the Catholic Church during the wars and over the shape of post-war memory, the role of graveyards as sites of reckoning with the past, and the issue of conflating competing traumatic memories in order to privilege one version of history over another.

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INTRODUCTION

The shape of this dissertation has evolved significantly since its conception in December of 2016, in part because a successful dissertation should retain an amorphous quality so that it can adapt to the constant acquisition of new knowledge in the research stage, but also because legislation passed in Poland and Spain within the last two years has drastically altered the foundation of historical memory in each country for better or worse. The stakes of this project are predicated on its relevance. The significance of its contribution to the field of Holocaust and Memory Studies can be measured by 1) its development of a language of connectivity through which it narrates the wartime experiences of Poland and Spain and the cultural, social, and political shockwaves that can be felt at present and 2) its ability to examine, engage with, and possibly predict movements towards historical amnesia in countries reeling from legacies of totalitarianism and/or dictatorships under the auspices of democracy. The remainder of this introductory chapter will encapsulate the central claims of each chapter as well as provide an overview of supporting evidence presented in this dissertation. Additionally, this introduction will look as objectively as possible at the aims and objectives of the project as a whole, recommendations for future research, acknowledgements of the limitations of this project, and a summary of this project's contribution to the fields of Comparative Literature and Holocaust and Memory Studies.

The structure of this dissertation as a project unfolding in reverse chronological order is intentional. The ultimate objective of this project is to investigate the conditions that nourish the breeding grounds for historical amnesia in countries coming out from under the bootheels of fascist dictatorships. Our point of departure in the first two chapters is the exploration of contemporary film in Poland and Spain, which contextualizes the precarious political

circumstances that have taken root in the countries' respective governments in relation to wartime memory. We then move "backwards" to meet the very site of trauma itself: the brutalized body of the victim of the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War in poetry of witness written from 1936-1945. It is imperative to identify the traumatic site with which current political bodies will not contend before parsing out issues of exile, transitions into democracy, and intergenerational legacies of shame that lead us back to the present moment at the culmination of the dissertation. The conditions necessary to create political and cultural environments like those described in Poland and Spain are structural, and not unique to any one nation; the fact that these countries have not previously been examined in conjunction with one another lends itself as evidence to the assertion that the active suppression of memory in newly formed democracies is not dependent on national identities. While there are many conditions that pave the way for historical amnesia to manifest, some fall outside the scope of this project. Therefore, I have included only the following conditions: the political fallout in the wake of World War II and the Spanish Civil War, the construction of collective memory spaces within the larger European memory project of the EU to which all member states must subscribe, the influence of the Catholic Church during the wars and over the shape of post-war memory, the role of graveyards as sites of reckoning with the past, and the issue of conflating competing traumatic memories in order to privilege one version of history over another.

Chapter 1 is heavily invested in providing the historical background of Poland and Spain's trajectories of joining the European Union and how that process has affected the national identity they bring to the supranational stage, e.g. a broader European consciousness. Poland's law, or rather gag order, forbidding looking critically at Poland's multi-faceted role in the Holocaust as a victim-bystander-perpetrator amalgam was not entirely internally sourced. The

European Union's willful ignorance of and lack of engagement with the communist past of post-Soviet countries that joined the EU in 2004 has sparked a memory war between Poland and the collection of other member states. While the European memory project of the EU cannot be blamed for proposing criminal sanctions for examining Poland's part in the Holocaust, it has certainly contributed to the hostility Poland is exhibiting in defense of a national historical memory that is largely unrecognized. Spain's accession process was much less painful and drawn-out on the bureaucratic front because they had already declared their *Transición* to democracy in 1977 after the death of Franco. However, that version of democracy was built upon an agreement that relegated Spanish Civil War historical memory to oblivion with the *pacto de silencio*. The political conditions that facilitated each country's transition from dictatorship, whether internally constructed or externally imposed, to democracy took aim at the individual physical body of the victims of the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War. Burying and stifling the traumatized body enabled amnesia to take hold; however, both poetry and film have resisted Poland and Spain's government-sanctioned practices of *desmemoria* and silencing. War time poetry and contemporary film in both countries have produced a mirror effect, where the ghosts of Poland's victims are echoed in the crypts of Spain's victims. The memory of the war that does not abet Poland's myth of martyrdom or Spain's myth of heroic nationalism has been effectively buried with the bodies; hence, when the bodies emerge from the grave, the memories, too, begin to surface. This is the theory of *crypto-memory*, which I propose can help to articulate the connective tissue between the concepts of state, film, and poetry.

Chapter 2 constructs the framework for the argument that the privileging of suffering under Nazism in the European Union has bred resentment and spurred populist backlash under the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in power in Poland. The EU's refusal to acknowledge the crimes

of communism as equal in measure to the crimes of fascism has ostensibly excluded Poland's national history under Soviet rule from memory integration between EU member states, most of which were occupied exclusively by Nazi Germany. The repercussions of this competitive memory struggle have manifested in Poland's recent contentious legislation, which forbids implying Polish guilt in crimes of the Holocaust. After international uproar and backlash from Israel, "Poland backpedaled" and moved "to defang the controversial law by eliminating criminal penalties for violators" in the summer of 2018.¹ Thus, it is still a crime to suggest Poles were complicit in any part of Nazi atrocities, but the potential three year jail sentence is no longer on the table. The chapter then proceeds to a close reading and contextualization of Władisław Pasikowski's film *Pokłosie* through the theoretical lens of Marianne Hirsch's *postmemory* in order to illustrate the way in which contemporary film in Poland is challenging the hegemonic national narrative of martyrdom and demanding a confrontation with sites of trauma that Poles participated in. The film is heavy-handed in its use of Catholic iconography and symbolism, inverting Polish martyrology and refusing to grant pardon to a country that considers itself the "Christ of Nations." The political tides of populism are swelling larger and stronger, and Chapter 2's conclusion surmises that as long as Poland refuses to contend with the traumatized bodies of the Holocaust, it will continue down the dark rabbit hole of denial.

Katherine Verdery learned from research in the Polish/Ukrainian borderland in Oltenia "that a dead person who does not receive a proper burial has a number of options....Concern for the well-being of ancestors and other dead is thus crucial to peaceful living and to an orderly universe; proper burial helps to ensure these."² One could then ask: would it not be in Poland's

¹ Santora, Marc, "Poland's Holocaust Law Weakened After 'Storm and Consternation,'" in *The New York Times*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/world/europe/poland-holocaust-law.html>

² Verdery, Katherine, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 53.

best interest to confront and re-appropriate dead bodies of victims so that this specter no longer haunts their national history? Denial will not achieve absolution, but perhaps reburial and acknowledging the bodies is the first step in the direction of coming out from under the ghosts of Poland's past.

Chapter 3 recounts Spain's accession into the EU and the foundational principles of its transition to democracy. At the same time the *pacto de silencio* was tapering down and new literature and scholarship about the Spanish Civil War began to emerge in the 1990s and early 2000s, a new memory platform materialized and began to take hold in Spain. As the Holocaust increasingly became the "entry ticket to European memory," Spain found itself yet again on the fringes of Europe as an outsider as the only dominant European power in the 1930s and 40s that was not subject to invasion by Germany. Sara Brenneis explains,

Spain, as Labanyi, Baer, and Estrada have all argued, saw itself as divorced from the Holocaust because of its historical legacy: namely, the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, the continued relative absence of Jews in Spain through the modern era, and ongoing anti-Semitism in the country, which has prevented Spaniards from associating their experience of the Nazi policies and practices of genocide with the Holocaust.³

The pressure to participate in the gradual cosmopolitanization of Holocaust memory in the EU led to the development of current Holocaust commemorations in which Spain not only participates, but shares with other formerly occupied countries in terms of survivor testimony and camp experience. Spain lays claim to the Mauthausen and Buchenwald experience of Spanish survivors, whom they stripped of their citizenship in the 1930s for their "rojo" or communist affiliation. The claim to Holocaust memory, whether rightful or not, has obscured critical and honest conversations about the crimes of the Spanish Civil War, as international and national focus shifts from Spain as the internal antagonist to Nazi Germany as the outside

³ Brenneis, *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 30.

aggressor. Through a close reading of Agustí Villaronga's *Pa negre*, again through the lens of Hirsch's *postmemory*, this chapter grapples with Spain's reticence to acknowledge its self-inflicted trauma, the effects of which are still felt bone-deep by the generation(s) after. It also confronts Spain's need for Jewishness to re-establish itself on an international stage after its state-sanctioned violence in the 1930s and seemingly passive role in World War II. This fictive use of "Jewishness" becomes an impetus to invigorate the memory of a nation.

Chapter 4 draws the reader from Poland's current political climate back to ground zero: the site of Holocaust trauma. The role of poetry "after Auschwitz" has been hotly debated, particularly in response to Adorno's frequently quoted but oft misinterpreted or decontextualized dictum in which he forbids the writing of poetry after Auschwitz. Polish poetry of witness has consistently taken up the mantle of defiance in its insistence on speaking of and for the dead. Tadeusz Różewicz refers to himself as the "shepherd of the dead," a phrase applicable to many of the literary and cinematic figures under examination in this dissertation. Czesław Miłosz's poetry, particularly "W Warszawie (In Warsaw)" and "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto (A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto)," are fixated on the concept of witnessing and denote a preoccupation with the dividing line between guilt and innocence. This examination of wartime Polish poetry draws into sharp relief the concept of *crypto-memory* and raises doubt about Poland's willingness to reckon with a checkered and fraught past; rather, it continues to pridefully claim the impressive literary legacies of its acclaimed poets, but continues to resist the very introspection their poetry demands. Holocaust memory, for now, is still in the crypt.

Chapter 5 concludes the research aspect of my dissertation with a contextualization of efforts to recover memory in Spain that have transpired in the last two decades. Through several elections and the unseating of prime ministers and political figures, Spain has arrived at a

juncture where the call for excavations of Franco's mass graves is being answered because it can no longer be ignored. The voices of the generations after are growing louder than the voices that enacted the *pacto de silencio*. The implications of the ongoing exhumations have yet to be fully realized, but when put into conversation with the poets of the graves of the Spanish Civil War, namely Miguel Hernández who was "...concerned with moral issues...with choices between life and death, civilization and barbarism," and Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, the memory of the displaced bodies becomes remobilized and recognized for the first time.⁴ In the last two years, Spain has begun inching towards progress in its movement away from demanding silence from a wounded country and people, a very recent development still in its early stages. I attribute this progress to the fact that Spain is confronting, face-to-face, the real sites of trauma, the bodies of the victims, in a way that Poland is still unwilling to do. The culmination of this dissertation points to at least one clear conclusion: if the silence is to be undone, it must first start with the body in the grave, from which *crypto-memory* will emerge.

My recommendations for future research are two-fold: they take the concepts and evidence developed in this dissertation as a point of departure for further related investigations and also acknowledge the limitations of this project by addressing relevant issues that fell just outside the scope of these chapters but could be addressed in a more fully developed version of this dissertation as a manuscript. Firstly, and perhaps most problematically, the texts and films surveyed are predominantly, if not exclusively, masculine. While a great deal of the groundbreaking research surrounding the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War has been authored by women, the primary sources selected have been written or produced by men. There are a number of reasons why this is the case, but predominantly because the majority of the war poetry

⁴ Rosenthal, *Poetry of the Spanish Civil War*, 8.

produced in the twentieth century was written by men who were both witnesses and often fighters. There were, of course, female resistance fighters, particularly in the *Armia Krajowa*, but their writings are often much less accessible as their male counterparts, if at all. Additionally, I did not feel that including female-authored texts without a chapter on the gendered experience of war and how this gets represented in literature and film was sufficient. This leads me to my first recommendation for future research: throughout the course of my research, the female voices that appeared in the texts surveyed were often silenced or written into the man's psyche, filtering out the feminine voice and therefore the feminine experience of war, which is inherently different than the masculine experience. Rape and sexual abuse are used as weapons of war to control the female body, which is often a metaphor for invading and exerting control over the motherland (e.g. Poland or Spain). Erin K. Hogan uses a line from the film *Calling the Ghosts* to denote, "Raping older women is destroying living history, raping younger women is destroying the future."⁵ This facet of gender disparity in representations of traumatized bodies is an area that can and should be investigated further in relation to this, calling upon writers such as Carme Riera, Dulce Chacón, Marina Mayoral, Carmen Laforet, and Gloria Fuentes.

In that same vein, an exploration of Poland's recent representations of the female experience of war or the experience of war as told by a female voice would be fruitful for further research. Films like Pawel Pawlikowski's *Ida*, Anne Fontaine's *The Innocents*, or Agnieszka Holland's *W Ciemności (In Darkness)* would lend themselves to conversations not only about gender and war, but also about guilt and innocence, particularly in the Catholic Church, as these films grapple with infanticide and concealed Jewish identity, Polish murder of Jewish families,

⁵ Hogan, Erin K., "Listening to the Pain of Others: Isabel Coixet's *La vida secreta de las palabras (The Secret Life of Words)*," in *Scars and Wounds: Film and Legacies of Trauma*, eds. Nick Hodgkin and Amit Thakkar (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

rape and pregnancy among nuns in postwar Poland, and stories of rescue by Polish citizens who risked their own lives as well as their families' to save Jews.

Lastly, the issue of Spain's contentious claim over Holocaust memory on public forums can be further contextualized by delving more deeply into *who* is doing this memory work specifically rather than compartmentalizing it into realms of politics, literature, etc. For instance, Javier Cercas' novel *El impostor* details the account of Enric Marco Batlle who falsely claimed to be a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. This Spanish claim over the camp experience, in this case, was completely falsified and similarly denotes a lack of specialists in Spain regarding Holocaust Studies as he was able to sell this lie for years. Rather, Spain is trying to reclaim fragments of Spanish memory that are part of the concentration camp universe without doing the historical or theoretical work. Additionally, because the Spanish victims that actually did suffer in the camps, like Semprún, were not Jewish, Spain's representation of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust is rather thin. All Jews are Sephardized in Spain, their unique identities erased or appropriated to fit the national narrative. Holocaust trauma in Spain was mobilized by an imposter and the effects this has had on Holocaust memory in Spain is worth investigating.

Through its confrontation with difficult and painful themes, texts, films, and testimonies, this dissertation contributes to the fields of Comparative Literature and Holocaust Studies by contextualizing the political movements that have taken root in Poland and Spain to evaluate two seemingly disparate histories and wartime experiences. The literature and film that have been realized as a result and in defiance of national amnesia and historical revision in both countries are jarringly similar; the structure of terror breeds a universal experience of fear. I am grateful to the descendants of the victims of the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War who have refused to

let their kin be swallowed by oblivion; and I am indebted to the twelve million lives lost in Poland and throughout Europe in the Holocaust and to the 200,000+ victims of Franco's barbarism in Spain. It is my hope that my research has been and continues to be in service of their memory and those who sought to preserve their voices.

CHAPTER 1: *CRYPTO-MEMORY* AND THE POLITICS OF AMNESIA

Preface

This dissertation identifies and refashions a critical point of convergence between Poland and Spain's national histories under the umbrella of Holocaust and Memory Studies in its examination of selections from each country's respective canon of film and literature pertaining to the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War. The resistance to literary and visual depictions of wartime memory in Poland and Spain poses a multitude of imperative questions that revolve around the denial of national guilt and the resulting government-sanctioned cultural amnesia. Two such illustrations of institutionalized practices of forgetting are Spain's *pacto de silencio* (pact of silence), imposed after the death of Franco, and Poland's recent law making it punishable by up to three years in prison to discuss or imply Polish guilt in crimes of the Holocaust, which emerged as a product of a longstanding history of resisting any admission of collaboration or complicity.⁶ I will focus primarily on the intersections between the survivor testimony and stories of witness that began to surface both during and in the immediate wake of World War II in Poland and the Spanish Civil War in Spain and more recent depictions of the "black-listed" memory of the Holocaust and crimes of fascist dictatorships in twentieth and twenty first-century literature and film in both countries.

In an attempt to interrogate the memory of each country's respective wars, it is critical to examine the ways in which their literature and film both contribute to and resist the layers of silence that stifle survivor testimony. Silence regarding crimes committed under the banner of fascism in both Poland and Spain has been an established tradition in public and private arenas,

⁶ Aderet, Ofer and Noa Landau, "Polish Parliament's Lower House Votes to Criminalize Mention of Polish Crimes in the Holocaust," *Haaretz*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/premium-poland-votes-to-criminalize-any-mention-of-polish-holocaust-crimes-1.5767561>.

with a burgeoning body of research and artistic representation emerging only within the last two decades. Permission to speak about these events, although still bridled, was granted as a stipulation for joining the European Union, a comprehensive European integration project, and thus contributing to a larger democratic memory space. The process of EU integration ultimately required a more open forum to confront each nation's fraught political history, a challenge that neither Poland nor Spain greeted without reticence. In their pursuit of EU acceptance, both nations conceded to the fact that a movement towards democratization, and ultimately Westernization, was a shift away from *desmemoria* or *disremembering*. In public European forums, Poland and Spain have somewhat made their respective attempts to produce a democratic façade while concurrently promoting nationalist agendas internally; although their public and private images seem to be at odds with one another, they are maintained by putting forth repressive legislation in the name of preserving their national identities, which ultimately become thinly veiled efforts to suppress memory that may prove detrimental to each country's reputation on the global stage. One germane facet of this dissertation's argument is that the very memory project democratization purports to build in the cases of Poland and Spain conversely perpetuates the narrative of silence imposed by the aforementioned dictatorships rather than dispelling it.

This investigation of Polish and Spanish poetry and film presses firmly on the interconnectivity of memory and amnesia as current legal and cultural prescriptions continue to restrict the preservation and transfer of memory. In short, this dissertation aims to build a framework for international intersections of memory between the disparate borders of Poland and Spain, which historians and critics have not previously studied together, thus proving that institutions of historical and cultural amnesia are structural phenomena rather than national. In

order to expand upon the contentious histories of Poland and Spain's dictatorships in the mid-twentieth century and their respective political and cultural responses to accusations of complicity and neutrality, the following chapters will survey a corpus of pertinent critical texts concerning both national histories and their current political climates. In doing so, these chapters will address points of convergence on the spectrum between real and mythic memories of the Spanish Civil War and World War II in Spain and Poland. More specifically, I will draw from texts and films written and produced from 1937 through present day to emphasize the myth of martyrdom in Poland and the myth of heroic democracy in Spain, both of which have a foothold in the Catholic Church and its involvement in modern national culture and politics.

The tension between real and mythic national memory bookends what I will refer to as *crypto-memory*, which resides somewhere in between. More specifically, the wounded and/or murdered physical bodies of the victims of the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War mark the site of trauma with which Poland and Spain are resistant to contend. These bodies are caught between the objective historical events that occurred and the sanitized version of these events on a public European platform. Poland and Spain's avoidance of confrontation with the site of trauma allows them to produce curated national histories that have not reckoned with guilt, perpetration, or complicity. The memory of the trauma has been effectively banished; hence, *crypto-memory* lies in the grave or crypt alongside the body, dislocated from history and buried beneath public consciousness.

The term *crypto-memory* also alludes to the history of crypto-Jews in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain, or Jews who elected to "convert" to Catholicism rather than be subject to expulsion in 1492, but continued to practice Judaism in secret. Similarly, it describes a locus of wartime and post-war memory that is suspended in a sort of national purgatory, as crypto-

Jews themselves were, and has found itself buried beneath nationalist ideologies and sentiments that largely ignore or actively suppress memory spaces that imply guilt for actions taken during the aforementioned wars. This dissertation does not assume the position of judge, jury, or executioner in weighing national wartime offenses on the scales of justice, but is instead concerned with whether or not consensual collective memory and consciousness is indeed possible in a post-dictatorship society. Additionally, it is interested in exactly what comprises the invisible archive of *crypto-memory* and the way in which these constructed myths that suffocate and encrypt memory are national attempts to identify as victim rather than perpetrator, and thus achieve some sort of public absolution. But is this absolution ever achieved? And can absolution dilute or change the way a national memory culture is made to feel responsible? Though Spain and Poland's individual quests for a selective historical erasure take different timelines, they closely parallel each other in their transition to and struggle with democracy after the fall of Stalin and Franco's dictatorships, a time in which public displays of post-war memory was prohibited.

I will first begin with a case study utilizing Jeffrey Herf's text *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, in which his project is "to illustrate the importance of politics for shaping the way a society thinks about its past while at the same time drawing attention to the autonomous weight that traditions and interpretive frameworks exert on political life," to discuss East and West Germany's contention with Nazism, more precisely West Germany's division between the democratic right and left, in order to situate my argument that although Poland and Spain were subjected to totalitarian rule and the memory suppression that followed, they remember their national histories differently, but not without overlap.⁷

⁷ Herf, Jeffrey, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1997), 9.

Memory Disparity in the Two Germanys: A Case Study

Germany's unconditional surrender to the Western Allies in 1945 marked a moment in which Germany would be subjected to the partitioning and foreign occupation it had imposed on Poland in 1939. While East Germany was, in some ways, essentially frozen in time in respect to progressing towards an open conversation about the national memory of WWII along with the rest of the Eastern Bloc, West Germany motioned towards democratization by joining the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) put into play by the Treaty of Paris in 1951.⁸ This community was the first foundational building block for what would become the European Union. By keeping a checks and balances system among the members (West Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), the ECSC was able to regulate the production of coal and steel, thus ensuring that no one country could ever create a war machine as powerful as Nazi Germany had in the 1930s and 40s.

Aside from political regulation of the production of material goods that could be utilized to wage war, democratization pushed for an acknowledgement of history and memory. Herf denotes, "...they all believed in liberal democracy and in the absolute necessity of preventing another German dictatorship. Their option for democracy posed a fundamental and enduring dilemma for the attainment of justice and the establishment of public memory of the Nazi era."⁹ The democratic shift forced a reckoning with an immediate shameful history, which brought Jewish matters to the fore in West Germany, and called for self-reflection that acknowledged "the centrality of anti-Semitism and Jewish matters within German history."¹⁰ Countries

⁸ "Treaty of Paris (ESCS)," *Eur-Lex: Access to European Law*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Axy0022>

⁹ Herf, *Divided Memory*, 201.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

previously occupied by the Soviet Union, namely Poland and East Germany in this case, widely agree that communist rule forbade honest and transparent confrontation with the memory of the war. So, too, can this principle be applied to Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain that stifled any conversation about the nature of the crimes committed in the mid-1930s. However, West Germany's post-war democratic left and right were both shoved into a face-to-face confrontation with the destruction of European Jewry in the wake of the Holocaust. This was no easy feat, "[Y]et it was within their power to see that justice was done and to shape a truthful national memory about the crimes of the Nazi past."¹¹

Herf's primary concern in his study is "how did the democratic left and the democratic right approach the issues of memory and justice?"¹² With the establishment of an international criminal court to conduct the Nuremberg Trials, Germany's crimes against humanity could hardly be ignored on the public stage, but how the divided country contended with that memory internally was more complicated. Herf asserts that *memory* itself "often evokes the influence of unconscious processes that lead to its repression or distortion," making it all the more challenging to try to establish a consensual collective memory amidst a country already divided by political and geographical lines.¹³ Moreover, what Herf refers to as "the weakness of public memory about the crimes of the Nazi era" resulted from "the labors of this 'all too wide-awake consciousness,' which remembered all too well what it would rather not see in political discussion."¹⁴ The countries that would form the European Union in its nascent stages drew a linear connection between Westernization and memory, specifically requiring "integration" and

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Ibid., 2.

¹³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

“justice” as part of the process of membership outlined in the *acquis communautaire*.¹⁵ The three conditions that must be satisfied and upon which EU membership depended were:

1. A functioning market economy with the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the EU;
2. Stable political institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and minority rights;
3. The ability to take on the obligations of EU membership, including the *acquis communautaire*, the EU’s legislative corpus.¹⁶

West Germany had already elected to subscribe to the process of democratization by joining the ECSC, and thus had implicitly casted their vote for memory and justice, but this begged a much larger question: what is the relationship between memory and democracy? What does it require from the players at hand? Tension between memory recovery and implementing measures for justice increased, and the Western Allies pressed West Germany to begin efforts in this direction; as a result, West Germany gave the Holocaust “a place” in its history annals, established a relationship with Israel in support of its establishment in 1948, and after an unacceptable delay, paid restitutions to some remaining survivors.¹⁷ According to Herf, “[T]he Communists did not suffer such agonies. They imposed a dictatorship of a supposedly enlightened elite,” and therefore did not contend with recuperative measures regarding national memory.¹⁸

While West Germany was arguably held more accountable and was more closely monitored in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Poland and Spain were confronted with the same demand to open a public space of discussion and documentation of Nazi and Civil War era crimes upon declaring their transition to democracy after the fall of the Soviet Union and the death of Franco, respectively. However, memory becomes impossible when colliding with

¹⁵ Ibid., 267.

¹⁶ Taras, Ray, “Poland’s Accession into the European Union: Parties, Policies and Paradoxes,” *The Polish Review* 48, no. 1 (2003): 10.

¹⁷ Herf, *Divided Memory*, 203.

¹⁸ Ibid., 203.

historical amnesia, which was undoubtedly an aftershock of Communist and Fascist dictatorships that outlasted the end of the two wars in question. It is in this way that Poland and Spain embody the political and historical divide demonstrated by the two Germanys in Herf's study; they are simultaneously propelled in the direction of democracy following the end of their dictatorships and eventual accession into the EU while still enforcing dictatorship-era legislation that halts the production, transmission, or discussion of memory. The concurrent existence of these two opposing forces has paved the way for the emergence, or in this case submergence, of *crypto-memory*.

Post-Accession Radicalism in Poland: Competing Memories in the European Union

Poland's seemingly perpetual state of precariousness did not begin with the onslaught of World War II as some might speculate, but rather originated in the nascent stages of its development as a country, culminating in a complete loss of statehood for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as the result of the third partition of the eighteenth century in 1795. For over a century, 123 years to be exact, Poland essentially did not exist in a geo-political sense until the restitution of its independence following the end of World War I in 1918. Under the leadership of Józef Piłsudski, Poland was beginning to establish a new national identity during the inter-war period; however, the German invasion of 1939 and the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union robbed Poland of its sovereignty once over. Poland was invaded and occupied on two fronts by both Soviet and German troops, caught in the crossfire between Nazism/National Socialism and communism. While National Socialism was effectually dismantled after the allies invaded Germany and other Nazi-occupied territories, communism became the governmental institution under which the post-war Soviet bloc was ruled. In an examination of Poland's position in the wake of World War II, Professor Siobhan Kattago

denotes, “While most West European countries experienced reconstruction and democratization after the war, the post-war experience of East Europeans, the Balts in particular, are more linked to occupation, deportation, and the demographic changes due to Soviet Russification policies.”¹⁹ The subsuming of Polish political and social structures by the Soviet Union undoubtedly shaped the country’s governmental inner-workings long after the end of communism in 1989, which in turn drastically affected the way in which Poland formally declared their commitment to democracy in 2004 by joining the European Union. As many scholars have argued, the rise of right-wing nationalism in Poland comes as a product of its position as a post-Soviet, post-communist country struggling with the desire to preserve a national historical memory that can be integrated into the accepted collective memory of the European Union.

Poland’s history, embedded with geographic partitions and cultural divides, experienced a great deal of turbulence from the seventeenth-twenty first centuries, which has noticeably shaped its proclivity for nationalist sentiments. Understanding Poland’s current populist turn requires a deeper investigation of life in Poland under communism, a time in which EU membership was clearly out of the question. *Solidarność* (Solidarity), a Polish anti-communist independent free trade movement in the early 1980s that helped grease the wheels for Poland to slide out from under Communist rule in 1989, was formed in response to Polish citizens’ desire to end martial law and join the democratization that had become the trend in Western Europe. Following the collapse of Communism, “optimists predicted that the country would become a member of the EU within five years”; however, this prediction did not come to fruition.²⁰ There was no place for Communism in post-1989 Poland, leaving former members of the Communist

¹⁹ Kattago, Siobhan, “Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History: Memory, Pluralism and Europe after 1989,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 3 (2009): 382.

²⁰ Taras, “Poland’s Accession,” 9.

party with no choice but to disguise their political sentiments or shift their alliances. According to Political Scientist Ray Taras, former Communists “scrambled to assume a new political identity in the democratizing system and in 1991 formed the Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD). This coalition and eventual party declared its commitment to the democratic game and to a pro-Western foreign policy.”²¹ It soon became clear that a fast-tracked entrance into the European Union was not a realistic prospect for a country emerging from under a regime lasting nearly half a century. Although the application process was slow, talks continued until 1993, when “Poland was given associate membership in the EU and formally applied for full membership in April 1994.”²² They once again faced denial of official membership upon receiving notification that they had not met the mandatory criteria set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993.

The nearly thirteen-year delay between Poland’s break with communism and the realization of its consideration for entry into the democratic EU institution drastically affected the support of EU membership from its citizens. Initially, the vast majority of Poles were in favor of joining the EU in the early 1990s, but “the complex, frustrating, and at times even humiliating process of negotiating accession conditions with the EU took a toll, then, on Poles’ enthusiasm for membership,” and gave the distinct impression that even if they were to be granted membership, they would be treated as second-class citizens or “peripheral Europeans.”²³ By the time the EU summit in Copenhagen ruled in favor of enlarging its membership, the number of those in support of the accession had dropped, but not enough to take Poland out of the running for candidacy.

²¹ Ibid., 5.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Ibid., 14-15.

On December 13, 2002, EU officials approved the accession of ten new countries, predominantly from the Soviet bloc. Poland, whose population constituted roughly half of all new members, was the largest state slated to be absorbed into the EU.²⁴ It had all but been ratified that Poland would be granted entry into the EU in 2004, but there were still concerns brewing amongst Polish citizens, particularly those who worked in agriculture and feared that free trade within the Union would cripple their farming businesses. Upon arriving on agreeable terms for these conditions, the referendum was passed and the Treaty of Accession was signed on April 16, 2003 and Poland officially joined the European Union on May 1, 2004.

The rise of Euroskepticism in Poland was not initiated solely by the stagnated accession process, but grew rapidly in the fertile soil aerated by the removal of the communist stranglehold in 1989. As Taras illustrates, “The first party, Self-Defense, arrived on the political scene in 1991 as a populist rural movement. It was headed by Andrzej Lepper, a onetime member of the communist party and a private farmer who took charge of a hunger strike staged by farmers unable to pay off loans.”²⁵ These strikes were a direct response to the aforementioned concerns about Polish farmers being bulldozed by the trade laws that would be enforced upon their acceptance into the EU. Self-Defense was propelled by a self-proclaimed sense of justice for Polish agricultural and manual laborers who were in danger of being overlooked by the larger political systems in the process of integrating, but they were not alone in their criticism of linking arms with Western Europe. Additionally, they were vocal about their fears of being completely enveloped by the Union and left little to no sovereignty, which was undoubtedly rooted in a history of partitions that did just that.

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

The second Euroskeptic party, “the *Liga Polskich Rodzin* [LPR- League of Polish Families] seemed bounded by a rigid nationalist and Catholic ideology,” which differed from the motivations previously seen amongst members of the Self-Defense party.”²⁶ The authority of the Catholic Church in Poland is not one that can be challenged easily internally or without criticism, so the possibility of moving towards a more secular governmental structure did not sit well with staunch Polish Catholics that had relied on the stability of the church during WWII and throughout Communist rule. They feared that “the religiosity of Poles might decline when the country joined a Europe that was secular and materialistic, embraced liberal views on many core issues of Catholic doctrine (abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality), separated church and state so categorically, and was dominated by Protestant countries.”²⁷ The role of religion in Poland had already been subjected to criticism, particularly anti-Semitic sentiments propagated by the Church both before, during, and after WWII, and joining a primarily Protestant union as a minority religious group awakened Polish reservations about yet again having their Catholic fundamental ideals put under the microscope.

Euroskeptic sentiments in Poland were prevalent in the years leading up to negotiations between the country and the European Union, and now the tempest has turned populist and has yet to be quelled. In January 2016, EU officials launched an unprecedented investigation into the inner-workings of Poland’s government after it came to light that the Law and Justice Party (PiS), a right-wing nationalist political party that is currently the largest party in Polish parliament, and President Andrzej Duda refused to swear in three justices that the previous parliament had chosen.²⁸ Polish parliament was given a deadline to respond to the investigation into the legitimacy

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ Strzelecki, Marek, “Poland to Snub EU as Kaczynski Derides Rule of Law Investigation,” *Bloomberg*. June 15, 2016,

of democracy in Polish government, at which point the leader of the Law and Justice party refused to cooperate.

In addition to ruffling feathers at the EU level, Poland has continued to ignite protests amongst its citizens with several rather draconian bills proposed over the last several years, one of which seeks to make punishable by imprisonment any implication that Poland had any culpability for crimes perpetrated in the Holocaust.²⁹ Another bill sought to illegalize abortion in nearly every scenario, but has since been retracted following a protest of millions of women. In this case, this surge of nationalism is in many ways still married to the Polish Catholic Church's authority, which is heavily propagated by the Law and Justice party.

The issue of “undemocratic” ideals in Poland, e.g. opposition to abortion, rejecting responsibility for Polish crimes during the Holocaust, etc., is not new phenomenon. What is new, and what is perhaps gaining public attention amongst citizens and EU officials, is the governmental sanctioning of and attempt to enforce these “ideals.” Bills proposing a total ban on abortion or heavy restrictions on historical dialogue are toying with the borders of democracy and may be on the verge of violating the EU's mandatory *acquis*, if they have not already. Most recently, the EU took judicial action and filed a lawsuit against Poland in 2018 for undermining the jurisdiction of independent courts.³⁰

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-15/poland-to-snob-eu-as-kaczynski-derides-rule-of-law-investigation>

²⁹ Charnysh, Volha and Evgeny Finkel, “Poland's New Holocaust Law Is Just the Latest Attempt to Officially Redefine its History,” *Washington Post*, February 3, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/03/polands-new-holocaust-law-is-just-the-latest-attempt-to-officially-redefine-its-history/?utm_term=.11e37271318a

³⁰ Strupczewski, Jan, “EU sues Poland for undermining independence of courts,” *Reuters*, September 24, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-poland/eu-executive-sues-poland-in-top-eu-court-for-undermining-independence-of-courts-idUSKCN1M412Q>

The European Union was formed in the wake of World War II in response to the atrocities that had ravaged Europe at the hands of the Nazis. Previously-occupied Western European countries turned toward more democratic leadership in an attempt to put as much distance between themselves and fascism as possible. The countries that fell under Soviet control, however, did not have the same luxury. For 44 years following the end of the war, the Polish People's Republic (PRL-Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa) endured a much different lived experience of communism than the theoretical experience of Western countries outside of the Soviet bloc. Kattago asserts,

Since the end of the war, three broad narratives have surfaced: a Western, a Soviet/Russian and (since 1989/1991) a post-Soviet/post-Communist narrative. Each narrative highlights different aspects of the war which are factually true but politically charged...The Western narrative of World War II highlights National Socialism as the main evil...In the post-Communist/post-Soviet narrative, there are two evils: Communism and National Socialism; however, Communism is widely regarded as the main evil by way of duration and intensity.³¹

This inability to identify a common “enemy” or cause to work against often puts Poland and other post-Soviet/post-communist countries in an impossible position. Indeed, “Eastern Europeans still need to find their way in accepting the communist past as part of their collective identity instead of just referring to it as an ‘ugly parenthesis’ in the region’s history,” which has not been part of the integration process within the EU thus far.”³²

Subscribing to the EU membership criteria also implies a subscription to a particular set of ideals, which are predicated on a collective interpretation of European history. A form of compromise was reached in 2004 when the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning communism, which was unsatisfactory in the eyes of the countries that were

³¹ Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 381-382.

³² Hogeia, Alina, “European Conscience and Totalitarianism: Contested Memory in the European Union,” *Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication* 7, no. 3 (2012): 60.

subjected to Soviet occupation. The formal condemnation was less than appealing to countries formerly under Soviet rule as the denunciation seemed minimal in comparison to the way in which Nazism had been and is still demonized. Thus, former Soviet-occupied countries called upon the EU to formulate a satisfactory stance on the crimes perpetrated under communism. In April 2009, the European Parliament passed the Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism in an attempt to validate the suffering of those who endured decades of communist rule.³³ The nationalist tides in Poland are a direct result of the fact that the EU's agreed upon collective memory of WWII and post-war life supersedes their national historical memory. The obvious method of combatting fear of being wiped off of the map quite literally for a second time is by adhering to national ideals, values, and structures, although that friction comes at a cost when it reaches a governmental level beyond that of the national such as the EU.

It would be easy to reduce the questionably recent populist turn in Poland to an ignorant adherence to a medieval style of governance in which the church rules the state and xenophobia, misogyny, and anti-Semitism are not only rampant but accepted, but that would be to neglect a convoluted history that has brought about this unpleasant rise of radicalism in Eastern Europe. Poland was the crucible of Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust being that all six death camps were constructed and operated by the Germans on Polish soil. It stands to reason that Poland has demanded validation of its national memory in European public consciousness being that Poland was the only country caught in the crosshairs of a two-front war between the Soviet Union and Germany. However, curating and sanitizing that history at a legal level is unquestionably problematic. Additionally, Poland's political aftermath from 1945-1989 looked very different than countries further west, which further alienates Poland from its EU member state

³³ Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree," 385.

counterparts. The conflict of memory has been a continual source of tension beneath the surface of diplomacy between Poland and the EU, and it looks as though the limits of that diplomacy are now being tested. Certainly conflicts over the privilege of memory are no excuse for behaving badly on the public stage and behind closed doors, but this lack of diplomacy and resurgence of Euroskepticism in Poland raises questions about if integration can ever fully be achieved in post-Soviet/post-Communist countries. Poland's responses to recent investigations and protests are, for now, our only gauge.

Hegemonic Narratives of una *Cultura herida*

Unlike Poland, Spain arguably has been able to exert more control over the way in which its national memory is recognized in Europe for several reasons. As a Western European country already "complete" in its *Transición* from fascism to democracy after the death of Franco, Spain faced little pushback from the EU member states in terms of its accession in 1986 alongside Portugal; upon accession, its suffering under Franco's dictatorship was acknowledged outside its borders, and there was no need to contend with the memory of foreign occupation as the war transpired internally. However, foreign aid from Hitler and Mussolini on the Rebel side and 40,000 foreigners who fought for the Republicans in the International Brigades puts in perspective the international scope of a country at war with itself.³⁴ Additionally, its long history of colonization and reputation as an invading force at the time of the Civil War as well as in previous centuries allowed it to guide the way in which its own history was documented, in contrast with Poland, which was often forced into passivity at the mercy of occupations and partitions throughout several centuries leading up to present day.³⁵

³⁴ Rosenthal, Marilyn, *Poetry of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 2.

³⁵ Loureiro, Angel G., "Spanish Nationalism and the Ghost of Empire," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1 (2003): 65.

The scaffolding upon which Spain's historical memory of the twentieth century was built has recently experienced a double-sided effort to contend with and simultaneously bury the crimes of the Spanish Civil War. The construction of this artificially-crafted or sanitized version of the memory of the war stems from the fact that even today, "General Franco and his regime enjoy relatively good press. This derives from a series of persistent myths about the benefits of his rule," as historian Paul Preston claims in his book *The Spanish Holocaust*.³⁶ He goes on to parse out several of these myths, beginning with

the carefully constructed idea that he [Franco] masterminded Spain's economic 'miracle' in the 1960s and heroically kept his country out of the Second World war... These [myths] derive from the initial lie that the Spanish Civil War was a necessary war fought to save the country from Communist take-over.³⁷

The fact that Franco has, thus far, remained in fairly good graces compared to other despots of the 1930s and 40s has paved the way for the state-mandated silence about the Civil War that persists today. This narrative of silence was not only perpetuated during the post-war Franco regime but instituted on a governmental level after his death with the implementation of the *pacto de silencio* or *pact of silence* in 1977 in order to facilitate a successful transition to "democracy." This declaration essentially provided all Spanish citizens with blanket amnesty for the events that transpired during the Spanish Civil War without any recuperative or reconciliatory effort. Franco himself still benefits from this narrative of amnesia; although he retains his reputation as a brutal dictator, he has not been demonized in global consciousness as Hitler or Mussolini have, and his body still rests in the *Valle de los Caídos* in the Catholic basilica, which seems a rather exalted burial for a war criminal. It is worth noting that in September of 2018, the Spanish Parliament voted in favor to exhume Franco's remains, though it

³⁶ Preston, Paul, *The Spanish Holocaust* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015), xii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xii.

is still unclear what will be done with his tomb as he is currently buried in the same site as a mass grave of nearly 33,000 victims of the Spanish Civil War.³⁸

Preston rightly deduces that “Spain today is still in the throes of a memory war. There are two sets of historical memory: the homogenous Francoist one imposed on the country during four decades of dictatorship and the diverse Republican ones, repressed until recent years.”³⁹ It is important to note that while these two sets of historical memory seem to be the only ones from which to choose when glancing back at the history of Spain’s Civil War, the nature of the Francoist historical memory is not decidedly homogenous. Professor Eric Calderwood challenges Preston’s assertion by bringing to light Franco’s promotion of Hispano-Arab culture, which “included the creation of a number of institutions that were meant to bolster cultural exchange between Spain and the Arab world and to foment the academic study of al-Andalus,” such as the General Franco Institute for Hispano-Arab Research, founded in 1938.⁴⁰ The subsequent tug-of-war over the right to memory in post-Franco Spain is not one that can be synthesized without a deeper investigation of the ideologies that contributed to the initiation of the war itself and motivated Franco’s military actions in the early 1930s. The subsequent chapters will further address the ways in which contemporary Spanish literature and film engage in a socio-political historical form of resistance to the *pacto de silencio* and advocate for a recovery of memory and an undoing of the tradition of *desmemoria* that has been upheld for decades.

³⁸ Minder, Raphael, “Spain to Exhume Franco From Monument He Had Built,” in *The New York Times*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/13/world/europe/franco-spain-mausoleum.html>

³⁹ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 519.

⁴⁰ Calderwood, Eric, *Colonial Al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 143.

Contemporary Spanish politics and culture find themselves in a double-bind in their effort to project a contrived self-awareness of their own “historical memory” while simultaneously attempting to excise a history of violence from a manipulated institutional memory and implant a more sanitized version of the events of the twentieth century into public consciousness. Literature and film have often been the vehicle for such governmental and cultural practices, but have inversely lent themselves to challenging collectively propagated versions of national histories. *Cultura herida*, Cristina Moreiras Menor’s aptly titled book as well as a fitting expression in the context of Spanish historicism, appositely conveys the present state of affairs regarding historical memory in Spain: it is not only wounded, but absent. Moreiras Menor demonstrates the ways in which the collective amnesia imposed upon post-Franco Spain is both a revolutionary concept in the immediate aftermath of the death of the dictator and unique to Spain’s own political past, but also a continuation of a prohibition against memory instilled from the very onset of the war. Her codification of collective amnesia as a contemporary phenomenon spurred by the Civil War comes into convergence with other histories of violence, most prominently Poland’s post-World War II historical memory.

As outlined in the opening pages of *Cultura herida*, the entrance into Spain’s recent historical wounds begins with “desmemoria/disremembering.” Moreiras-Menor argues that Spain has pursued

...la borradura de un pasado que se empeña en perderse en una logica de la desmemoria y que, desde la oficialidad institucional, se instala en el colectivo nacional bajo la premisa de una imperativa necesidad de abrirse a una nueva realidad que nada tiene que ver con su anterior. (...the erasure of a past that persists in a logic of forgetfulness and that, from institutional officiality, is installed in the national collective under the premise of an imperative need to open up to a new reality that has nothing to do with its past.)⁴¹

⁴¹ Moreiras Menor, Cristina, *Cultura herida: Literatura y cine en la España Democrática* (Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2002), 28.

Spain, in its attempt to administer an historical anesthetic to witnesses to the war and their progeny, finds itself faced with the impossible task of surgically removing violence (e.g. mass extra-judicial executions of Republicans by Rebels), initially forbidden from remembrance under Franco, in order to superimpose what Moreiras Menor describes as hegemonic narratives that “disremember” (desmemoria) or “dehistoricize” (deshistorizada) the gruesome history of the Spanish Civil War.⁴² Thus, we have the current installation of an embalmed version of the history of twentieth-century Spain, the effects of which can be seen in other examples of European post-war history as well. As we have come to understand it within the field of Memory and Trauma Studies, memory is often categorized as individual, collective, and/or institutional.⁴³ While the first two are certainly at stake in the texts under scrutiny, they are undoubtedly shaped by the cultural and political discourses that determine a nation’s institutional memory. These narratives of a sterilized national history are embraced and upheld within the country’s literature and cinema, predominantly those of the 1980s and 1990s, and are faced with a textbook Freudian case of repressed trauma. It is only recently, within the last two decades, with the emergence of the *Asociación de la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (ARMH; or Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory), in 2000 that this repression has even been formally “acknowledged,” or at the very least alluded to. Moreiras Menor establishes the basis for the recent literary and cinematic attempt to reckon with cultural amnesia by examining the growing resistance to the hegemonic narrative that dominated Spain’s curated version of the years spent under Franco. She postulates,

⁴² Ibid., 30.

⁴³ Orla-Bukowska, Annamaria, “New Threads on an Old Loom: National Memory and Social Identity in Postwar and Post-Communist Poland,” in *The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

La narrativa hegemónica que se asienta en la España de los ochenta se erige fundamentalmente en dos procesos y deseos que dominan la esfera social y política de estos años, proceso y deseo ya comenzados a articularse antes de la muerte del dictador, pero que ahora toman fuerza y, sobre todo, son compartidos por todos los estamentos sociales: el deseo de reforma o cambio (en los primeros años) y de ruptura (a partir de los ochenta) con la ideología franquista, y en consecuencia con todo su aparato represor para dar entrada a una democracia donde los valores de igualdad, libertad, y pluralidad sean las bases de su aparato ideológico. [The hegemonic narrative that is based in the Spain of the eighties arises fundamentally in two processes and desires that dominate the social and political sphere of these years, process and desire that had already begun to be articulated before the death of dictator, but that now take force and, above all, they are shared by all social groups: the desire for reform or change (in the first years) and rupture (from the eighties) with the Francoist ideology, and consequently with all its repressive apparatus to give entry to a democracy where the values of equality, freedom, and are the foundations of their ideological apparatus.]⁴⁴

It is precisely this tension between the precedent of silence that outlasted Francoism and the artistic representations of this repression that demand scrutiny in order to deduce whether or not this egalitarian memory space can indeed exist in the post-war social and political sphere in Spain. The Spanish texts produced post-1977 seem unconsciously unable to acknowledge or express the underlying violence of Spain's historical memory. Indeed, the transition from dictatorship to democracy marked the moment in which a pact of silence was enforced outside the auspices of Fascism and all literature and subsequent discourses under that umbrella were to embrace the aesthetic of that silence.

Similarly, Spain's repressed memory finds its Eastern European counterpart in Poland in its own wrestling with institutional memory after World War II, as well as a recent international call for an investigation into the blurred boundaries between victimization and complicity.⁴⁵

While Poland, too, has seated itself firmly in the position of martyr, the "Christ of Nations,"⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida*, 60.

⁴⁵ Gross, Jan Tomasz, *Fear: Anti-semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2007).

⁴⁶ Orla-Bukowska, "New Threads," 179.

and the “bastion of Christianity,”⁴⁷ which has become “the preferred self-image of the Polish nation, framed in heroism and sacrifice,” it finds itself inhabiting a dual role that Spain most certainly can identify with in some form or another: victim and accomplice.⁴⁸ Where Spain departs from the tense territory of inhabiting these two roles is in its suspension between the two, but its refusal of both. In relying on twentieth-century literature and cinema to propagate the hegemonic narrative of silence, as Moreiras Menor asserts, “disremembering” denies the presence of violence on either side, be it the victim or perpetrator.⁴⁹ It also refutes the very topography that is embedded with violence itself, as has been demonstrated in *Las fosas del olvido* and *Las fosas del silencio*, documentaries which explicitly capture images of bullet holes left in the walls where summary executions took place. Until very recently, there has been not an absence of trauma in Spanish literature, but rather a stifling of the voices who would publicize it. Moreiras Menor claims that it is what is not there, or what is phantasmically present, that reveals the encrypted trauma in Spain’s historical memory.⁵⁰ The same phenomenon exists in the canon of post-war Polish literature, much of which was banned for attempting to address the country’s deep wounds.⁵¹ While some Polish writers abandoned historical memory under communism, echoes of fascist ghosts were embedded in the literature of Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, Tadeusz Różewicz, etc. This element of absence is at the root of the hegemonic

⁴⁷ Gross, Jan Tomasz, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 90.

⁴⁸ Struve, Kai, “Eastern Experience and Western Memory: 1939-41 as a Paradigm of European Memory Conflicts,” in *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-occupied Poland, 1939-1941*, eds. Elazar Barkan, Cole, Elizabeth A. Cole and Kai Struve (Leipzig: Simon-Dubnow-Institute Fur Jüdische Geschichte Und Kultur E.V. 43., 2007).

⁴⁹ Moreiras Menor. *Cultura herida*, 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵¹ Czesław Miłosz’s *Zniewolony umysł/A Captive Mind*, written in 1953, was banned from publication or distribution in Poland for its stark criticism of communism while Poland was subject to Soviet rule.

narratives still perpetuated in Spain. Where Spain departs from shared historical debates regarding the preservation of memory or lack thereof is in its advocating for “peace” over justice.

While it would be inaccurate and a product of poor historicism to equate two traumatic events within two different nations, it is important to examine common threads that might lead to a better resolution than may have initially been produced. For example, after the collapse of apartheid in South Africa at the end of the twentieth century, a Truth and Reconciliation Committee was instituted to address and redress crimes committed under apartheid. While many perpetrators were given amnesty, it was not blanket amnesty that was applied, but a system of confessing crimes considered unpunishable since they were permitted by law in hopes for achieving some reconciliation with the victims. It is important to note that this was not the sweeping hand of justice instantaneously absolving perpetrators of their crimes, but a process established theoretically in order to work towards some kind of closure. Perhaps quite antithetically, Europe took a different route in its establishment of the first international criminal court with the Nuremberg Trials following the liberation of the concentration and death camps of World War II. While it has been widely acknowledged that neither of these options were sufficient in their responses to heinous crimes, some recourse was necessary and at least attempted. Poland’s Institute of National Memory investigated the massacre in Jedwabne in the early 2000s, though its effects were lukewarm, as 28 percent of the respondents to a survey in 2001 still believed Germans were the sole perpetrators of the massacre.⁵² In Spain, no judicial measures have been taken. Sara Brenneis confirms in her recent book *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, “It was not until the 1990s, as the rest of Europe had arrived at a period of ‘normative formation and institutionalization of cosmopolitanized memoirs’ of the Holocaust, that Spain finally began

⁵² Gross, *Neighbors*, 120.

its tentative process of examining the past. Yet there have been no truth commissions, no indictments of Franco-era criminals, no *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in contemporary Spain.”⁵³

One example that speaks to the accuracy of *Cultura herida*’s assertions about the desire for a democratic memory space butting up against a deeply ingrained hegemonic narrative of repression in Spain is Alfonso Domingo’s *Las fosas del olvido*, first debuted in 2003.⁵⁴ This documentary in particular identifies itself as a counter-hegemonic narrative with the purpose of uncovering or revealing historical truths that have been obfuscated, but in fact does precisely the opposite. The film overtly abandons delegating any sort of responsibility and acknowledgement of crimes committed primarily by Fascist Rebels in their eradication of Communist Republicans. For instance, there are several photographs on screen demonstrated scenes of mass executions, but the “voice of god” documentarian does not distinguish between or identify victim or shooter. Additionally, the film mentions mass executions occurring on both sides of the parties at odds without contextualizing death tolls and motives. While both Rebels and Republicans conducted such shootings, it is estimated that ~50,000 Rebels were killed at the hands of the Republicans as a result of warfare on the battlefield, while 500,000 Republicans were killed by Rebels by way of mass executions.⁵⁵ Additionally, in the film’s depiction of the exhumations of the mass graves and revelation of the bones of those brutalized in the war, there is little explanation of exactly what is being exhumed or why, and places an emphasis on the hysterical witnesses of the digging. The production of documentaries like Domingo’s were supported by the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, which “has lobbied for the disinterment and

⁵³ Brenneis, Sara J., *Spaniards in Mauthausen: Representations of a Nazi Concentration Camp, 1940-2015* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 26.

⁵⁴ *Las fosas del olvido*. Dirección por Alfonso Domingo y Itziar Bernaola (Argonauta Producciones para TVE, 2003.)

⁵⁵ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, xvi.

identification of Republican supporters” and spurred “the heightened demand by the public for the publication of stories concerning Spain’s recent past in the popular press and kiosk literature.”⁵⁶ However, the way in which these images are often brought to light does not necessarily serve the democratization of memory. In this case, there is an absence of context, clarity, and conversation; there is ultimately only the illusion of fully addressing crimes perpetrated during the war.

This gesture towards establishing a more progressive arena in which to confront memory, too, was a product of the push for democracy as a prerequisite for joining the EU. However, since World War II was the basis upon which the EU was founded, Spain found itself at a disadvantage in that it was never a German or Soviet-occupied territory, and thus could contribute to the larger conversation about wartime memory only from the margins. Rather than contend with the scars that the Spanish Civil War had left on Spain’s topography and collective psyche, it sought to insert itself into a Jewish memory space that the majority of Europe could relate to in the wake of the Holocaust. The fact that “the Holocaust could be the first and most important element of an emerging global memory” presents a platform for shared memory from which Spain could be excluded without carving an avenue for its relevance to cosmopolitan Holocaust memory.⁵⁷ This, however, calls into question the artificiality of Spain’s contribution to the EU’s democratically constructed wartime memory. Much like Spain’s revision of a sanitized historical memory, its own tenuous relationship with a Jewish past is characterized by its absence, or rather invoking Jewish history when they are needed for the national narrative. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and required conversion of Jewish citizens

⁵⁶ King, Stewart, “The Criminal Past: Violence, Memory and Community in the Basque Country in Jose Javier Abasolo’s *Nadie es inocente*,” in *Guerra y memoria en la España contemporánea (War and Memory in Contemporary Spain)*, eds. Alison Ribeiro de Menezes et al., (Madrid: Verbum Editorial, 2009), 244-45.

⁵⁷ Struve, “Eastern Experiences,” 44.

(*conversos*) that opted to renounce their faith in order to retain their Spanish citizenship, the only Jewish presence that existed for centuries was that of crypto-Jews, who were forbidden from practicing their faith or revealing their identity as Jews. A nationally imposed silence required the practice of Jewishness to be relegated to the realm of the invisible and such practices could only be performed and embraced in exile or in hiding. Due to the lack of a Jewish presence in Spain, it has found itself in a precarious position of having to forge a new historical space that allows it to participate in the political, cultural, and historical conversations regarding the aftermath of the Holocaust, the predominant topic of European Jewish history, with its neighboring European countries. The following chapters will probe the methods Spain has employed to construct a bridge between Spanish Republican and European Jewish memory of destruction and deportation, and thus has entered into the sphere of international Holocaust memory.

Exiting a dictatorship in favor of a transition to democracy, as we have briefly examined in both Poland and Spain, denotes a pivotal historical rupture. Paul Connerton describes this transition as such: “The trial by fiat of a successor regime is like the construction of a wall, unmistakable and permanent, between the new beginnings and the old tyranny. To pass judgement on the practices of the old regime is the constitutive act of the new order.”⁵⁸ Rather than a wall, however, I argue that this rupture conjures a crack through which memory slips, or rather is dragged into by suppression, oppression, and repression in an effort to erect “new beginnings” and shun “old tyranny.” The danger that Germany, Poland, and Spain encountered in their desire to lay their fraught histories to rest is that “[T]he more total the aspirations of the new regime, the more imperiously will it seek to introduce an era of forced forgetting.”⁵⁹ The

⁵⁸ Connerton, Paul, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

refusal of these two countries to relinquish nationalist sentiments in constructing new historical narratives for themselves closes the memory space democracy was intent to open. Connerton similarly asserts, “What is horrifying in totalitarian regimes is not only the violation of human dignity but the fear that there might remain nobody who could ever again properly bear witness to the past.”⁶⁰ While totalitarian regimes seek to exterminate the possibility of the witness, post-dictatorship democratic regimes turn towards historical reconstruction to tutor national collective memories, bury testimony of those who had survived, and curate a sanitized version of the nation’s history. An overwhelming repository is then created in the crack that forged crypto-memory, thus “[W]hat we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled.”⁶¹ Pierre Nora names this archive as “the deliberate and calculated secretion of lost memory,” referring to it as a storehouse for “secondary memory” or “prosthesis memory.”⁶² He elaborates further that memory, in particular Jewish memory, that demands recognition, such as the wartime archives of Spain and Poland, then becomes “archive-memory,” “duty-memory,” or “distance-memory.”⁶³ He speaks of “mirror-memory” as the “ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity, and even more pertinently, of the “disintegration of history-memory,” when the “task of remembering makes everyone his own historian.”⁶⁴ These various iterations of memory, when confronted by dictatorial regimes turned democracies, are consumed by the historical fissure of this traumatic transition, and are thus disappeared, disremembered, and disassembled. The numerous fractured pieces of the skeleton

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Nora, Pierre, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," in *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 13.

⁶² Ibid., 14.

⁶³ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 15 & 18.

of collective memory, each bone represented by the aforementioned variations of memory, are entombed in the crypt of wartime testimony and witnessing, relegated to silence, and only now a subject for excavation by controversial and palimpsestic literary and visual representations.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY AT ODDS: CONTESTED MEMORY SPACES IN *POKŁOSIE*, POLAND, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The recent rise, or I argue resurgence, of populism in Poland has been largely influenced by the historical narrative embedded in the foundation of the European Union. The ways in which the institution of the EU has shaped discourses surrounding memory spaces and commemorative practices in Europe has contributed to a rift in the historical memory of post-Soviet countries that were granted entry into the EU in 2004, namely Poland. The very construction and consolidation of the EU was born from the collapse of National Socialism in the wake of World War II, thus defining a common memory space to which future Member States must subscribe if they wished to contribute to the supranational project of the EU. Harvard Lecturer Peter Verovsek contends, “Almost every study of European integration recognises – or at least grudgingly concedes – that the European project was ‘in large measure conceived in conscious opposition both to Nazism and to the recurrence of any alternative hegemonic aspiration of one state over the continent.’”⁶⁵ To prioritize the memory of National Socialism, however, is perceived by post-Soviet countries as favoring the crimes of Nazism over the crimes of communism on the scales of historical justice. This practice of privileging memory has spurred a recent effort to construct and preserve a national historical memory in Poland that acknowledges and validates the crimes committed under communism, a past the original six founding members of the EU did not experience. This chapter’s purpose is three-fold; it will examine: 1) the ways in which collective memory has been shaped by the European Union, 2) the effects of these hyper-controlled memory spaces on Poland’s national memory as evidenced

⁶⁵ Verovsek, Peter J., “Expanding Europe through Memory,” in *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, (Sage Publications, 2015), 533.

in the film *Pokłosie* and Poland's response to the historical account of Jan Gross in *Sąsiedzi* (*Neighbors*), and 3) the role of the Catholic Church as a longstanding foundational element of Polish society and governance and its mediation of Jewish Holocaust memory in Poland.

Commemorative Responses to Crimes against Humanity in Occupied Countries & the EU

The nascent stages of the development of the European Union initially found their footing in the political, social, and legal responses to the horrors of the Holocaust and World War II. The alliance between the original six founding members of what was to become the European Union were united by the central trauma of German-occupation and bore the scars of concentration camps, deportation stations, and drastically reduced populations, mostly Jewish. As Verovsek posits, "The first expansion of the European Communities was a consolidation of the western alliance that had fought together during the Second World War. The same cannot be said for the post-authoritarian states brought into the European fold in the 1980s."⁶⁶ Participation in or subscription to the collective memory of life under Nazism upon which the EU institution was founded became a sort of unspoken prerequisite for membership for the countries who would later apply for entry. Verovsek further explicates, "As a motivational resource, memories of war helped political leaders place the costs of expansion into perspective. For example, meetings between European leaders often start with a sharing of World War II memories, which help reinforce shared identities and goals."⁶⁷ Developing a platform upon which memories and experiences of the war could interact and converse helped to identify a set of shared goals, which allowed for the element of unity that Europe desperately needed following World War II.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 538.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 535.

Shaping these memories into tangible and visible memorials has become a widespread practice in Europe. Monuments to the victims of the Holocaust have been and continue to be constructed worldwide in EU member states and abroad to create a culture of commemoration in order to resist the threat of forgetting as the last eyewitnesses of the Holocaust disappear. “Shoes on the Danube,” sculpted by Gyula Pauer and Can Togay, display shoes fixed to the ledge overlooking the Danube River in Budapest, marking the location where Hungary’s Jewish citizens were lined up alongside the river and shot, abandoning their shoes as they fell into the river below.⁶⁸ The “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” designed by Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold, exhibits concrete blocks of varying sizes to create a series of waves on a platform not far from the Reichstag in Berlin to honor the memory of those murdered by the Nazis.⁶⁹ POLIN, a museum dedicated to preserving the history of Polish Jews, opened in 2013 in Warsaw to introduce visitors to Jewish life in Poland both before and during the war in an effort to preserve the memory of a Jewish culture that once flourished in Poland.⁷⁰ An advanced and highly developed culture of memory has emerged from under the boot heels of Nazism as an act of resistance and preservation amongst EU Member States still grappling with the aftermath of German occupation.

The same efforts to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, however, have not taken place in the overall public consciousness of the EU when it comes to the crimes of the communist state in post-Soviet EU member states who experienced a double-occupation under Germany and the USSR. Kattago affirms, “Unlike World War II which ended with the controversial Nuremberg Trials, Communism ended without official recognition of the crimes

⁶⁸ See Image 1 in Appendix.

⁶⁹ See Image 2 in Appendix.

⁷⁰ See Image 3 in Appendix.

committed in the name of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the fact that Putin's government increasingly mythologized the Great Patriotic War prevents the very recognition of Communist crimes that Nuremberg in its flawed way facilitated."⁷¹ While the crimes of National Socialism were immediately recognized, the memory of the crimes under communism continues to struggle for recognition within the EU, let alone recuperative jurisdiction condemning the actions of communist regimes. Not all juridical responses to mass atrocities end with a tribunal such as the Nuremberg Trials. Yet, there has neither been a tribunal nor a commission officially recognizing the crimes experienced by post-Soviet countries both within and outside of the EU.

In terms of the establishment of the EU after World War II, it was clear that nations occupied at the time by the Soviet Union were not eligible candidates to join a democratic institution. However, after the fall of communism in 1989, it would be fifteen years before Poland and other post-Soviet nations would be granted entry into the EU. While this decision was, in part, due to Poland's initial failure to meet all of the terms of the *acquis*, many scholars argue that the rupture in national (Poland) vs. supranational (EU) memory contributed to the delay in accession, which caused a great deal of embarrassment for Poland and its formerly-occupied counterparts. This conflict over the privileging of particular histories has caused a number of issues since Poland's entry into the EU in 2004, one of which being that "new post-authoritarian and post-communist member states have brought new memories into the European narrative space, forcing continental institutions and existing members of the EU to negotiate the past."⁷² These (at times failed) efforts to negotiate with a very recent and painful past have added insult to injury with the delayed recognition of the severity of the crimes committed under communism in Poland.

⁷¹ Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree," 384.

⁷² Verovsek, "Expanding Europe through Memory," 532.

What little action has been taken to legitimize the suffering of those who were under double-occupation consists of creating commemorative spaces and practices as well as condemning totalitarian regimes. Kattago asserts, “Although both National Socialism and Stalinism may be viewed as totalitarian, the crimes of communism are generally regarded to be in a different category from those of the Holocaust.”⁷³ The attack on European Jewry, handicapped persons, homosexuals, Polish Catholics, political dissidents, and other minority groups by the Nazis was an intensely concentrated reign of terror, which was unprecedented in terms of the mechanized fashion in which these lives were destroyed. Communist regimes did not employ the same methods of extermination to murder “undesirable” populations, but “Communism is widely regarded as the main evil by way of duration and intensity” in post-Soviet countries such as Poland.⁷⁴ The inability to find a shared memory space in which the legacies of both totalitarian regimes can coexist, be condemned, and the victims be commemorated continues to be a source of tension between Poland and the EU.

Lastly, memorials, museums, and monuments have functioned in a much different capacity in post-Soviet nations than memorials to the victims of the Third Reich. For instance, “[S]ymbols of Communism seem to be taken lightly in the West, whereas symbols of National Socialism are considered sinister and taboo. Western narratives of World War II suffer from an unbalanced account privileging the Western Front and underestimating the crucial role of the Red Army in winning the war.”⁷⁵ The hammer and sickle, symbols donned by the communist flag, are not nearly as demonized in contemporary European culture as the swastika or *Totenkopf*, which in many countries are illegal to display openly.⁷⁶ The fact that public reactions

⁷³ Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 381.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 382.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 383.

⁷⁶ The “death head” insignia on Nazi uniforms and paraphernalia

are, on the whole, less visceral when confronted with symbols of communism is largely because “[W]hile most West European countries experienced reconstruction and democratization after the war, the post-war experience of East Europeans, the Balts in particular, are more linked to occupation, deportation, and the demographic changes due to Soviet Russification policies.”⁷⁷ In other words, the swastika became a symbol of evil immediately after the war, while communist symbols were publicly employed and displayed for decades after. Thus, communist symbols became more familiar and acceptable, whereas fascist symbols were demonized from the beginning, but not without the exception of instances of fetishization and circulation in underground channels.⁷⁸ Apart from symbols, Stalin’s likeness, in the form of busts/monuments, still stands in various parts of Russia, although many of his monuments were destroyed in the 1960s in Hungary and elsewhere. Moreover, “Polish criminal law prohibits the use of totalitarian symbols, including those utilized under Fascism and Communism,” but this law is not one that has been embraced or implemented in a larger European context, lending some legitimacy to suggesting that the EU does not consider the crimes under communism to be entirely reprehensible.⁷⁹

Structural Responses from the EU & Poland’s Populist Reply

It is clear that the legacies of German and Soviet occupation are ingrained in the consciousness of each individual Member State in varying ways, but the European Union’s response to the rising tensions between conflicting national vs. supranational memories has been

⁷⁷ Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 382.

⁷⁸ Nicol, Mark, “Ebay’s sick trade in Holocaust souvenirs: Outrage over auctions of Death Camp relics,” in *Daily Mail*, November 2, 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2485251/Ebays-sick-trade-Holocaust-souvenirs-Outrage-auctions-Death-Camp-relics.html>

⁷⁹ Fijalkowski, Agata, “The criminalisation of symbols of the past: expression, law and memory,” in *International Journal of Law in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 311.

principally uniform. Kattago claims that three competing memories have emerged within the last century, each identifying the predominant evil based on their experience under one or both regimes.⁸⁰ The Soviet narrative identifies National Socialism as the ultimate evil; the Western narrative likewise sees National Socialism as the ultimate evil; but the post-Soviet/post-Communist narrative acknowledges the malignance of National Socialism, but privileges Communism's duration as the ultimate evil.⁸¹ The question at hand is not only whether or not the crimes of each regime should be equated and if that minimizes the atrocities of the Holocaust, but more importantly whether or not these two memory narratives can co-exist in a productive and respectful fashion without creating a space in which trauma becomes competitive. Currently, it does not appear that such a platform exists nor does it seem that current memory practices facilitate a constructive dialogue that contributes to the unification of Member States within the EU.

As was discussed previously, unity was achieved amongst the founding members of the EU based on their status as German-occupied countries, which prompted claims by Verovsek and other scholars that "by the first expansion of the European project in the 1970s the Holocaust had become 'the European entry ticket,' and that "it was the accession of East-Central Europe, which sought to place communist crimes on par with Nazi atrocities, that fundamentally challenged the 'legitimation of Europe through the creation of a common conception of history.'"⁸² What can be inferred from these claims is that a commonly shared memory of the war had already been instituted among the six founding members and many other Member States

⁸⁰ Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree," 382.

⁸¹ Ibid., 382.

⁸² Verovsek, "Expanding Europe through Memory," 532.

that joined later. Moreover, this common memory was not challenged on a large scale until the accession of post-Soviet countries caught between abandoning their past in favor of a transition to democracy and legitimizing and vocalizing their experiences under communism publicly. Many countries, “[I]n their transitions to democracy,...looked to ‘modern’ Europe as a way of breaking with their dictatorial past.”⁸³ In short, the legacy of communism did not count as an “entry ticket” in the same way that the legacy of National Socialism did, so in order to join the EU’s unanimous collective memory space, one had to “break with their dictatorial past” and abandon championing their national memory or equating it with the supranational memory narrative of the EU.

Recent challenges to the EU’s “disrememberance” of communist crimes have come from several post-Soviet nations who, in 2004, petitioned to gain the European Parliament’s official condemnation of totalitarian versions of communism. An initial resolution was adopted, but in 2008, there was another call “for a common EU stance on Communist crimes,” rather than a vague condemnation.⁸⁴ What resulted from this series of demands was the Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism, passed in 2009 by the European Parliament, which essentially named August 23rd as the Day of Remembrance “for the victims of Nazism and Stalinism, which commemorates the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact signed by Germany and the USSR in August 1939.”⁸⁵ This is the first instance in which the crimes of communism and Nazism have been placed on a theoretical platform, garnering attention from the European public and receiving recognition as regimes laden with victims of crimes against humanity. However, a day

⁸³ Ibid., 540.

⁸⁴ Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree,” 385.

⁸⁵ Verovsek, “Expanding Europe through Memory,” 545.

of remembrance rather than a legal decree against symbols of communism or something more concrete has not fully quelled the unrest between the member states at odds with the EU project.

In light of this troubling dynamic, Poland has grown increasingly restless. The populist Law and Justice Party (PiS) has risen to become the most powerful political party in the Polish Parliament. The rise of the radical right in Poland is directly correlated with the lack of validation the country has received from Western countries as a victim of Stalinism, which has contributed to the recent push for championing Poland's national memory over all other narratives. While the need for preserving one's national historical memory is not unwarranted, the ways in which these efforts are currently manifesting are deeply troubling. Poland has gained a reputation for promoting a legacy of martyrdom, claiming to have been "crucified for the rest of Europe" during the eighteenth-century partitions and WWII in high school history books. This assumed position of "martyr" has become an identity that is now sanitizing Polish history rather than emphasizing their precarious position as a country previously caught between a brutal two-front war.

Following the publication of NYU Professor Jan Gross' book *Neighbors* in 2000 in Polish and 2001 in English, which investigates the murder of several hundred Jewish inhabitants by their Polish neighbors in the town of Jedwabne, he received a multitude of death threats accusing him of being a Polish traitor.⁸⁶ Acclaimed Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk received similar death threats and retaliation after the publication of her novel *The Books of Jacob* in 2014 for her discussion of contentious relations between Poles and Jews.⁸⁷ There have been many

⁸⁶ Pileggi, Tamar, "Poland Moves to Strip Jewish Holocaust Scholar of Award," in *Times of Israel*, February 14, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/poland-moves-to-strip-jewish-holocaust-scholar-of-award/>

⁸⁷ Brown, Helen, "Olga Tokarczuk: 'It's time for us to look at Poland's relationship with the Jews,'" in *Financial Times*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/076bb888-372b-11e8-8b98-2f31af407cc8>

other instances of Poland's refusal to contend with its controversial past, but none so starkly revisionist as the law passed in 2018 by the Polish Parliament, which states:

*Who publicly and against the facts ascribes to the Polish Nation, or the Polish State the responsibility or complicity for the Nazi crimes committed by the III German Reich, or other crimes which constitute crimes against peace, humanity, of war crimes, or (who) otherwise greatly diminishes the responsibility of the real perpetrators of these crimes, will be subject to fine or three years of imprisonment. The sentence shall be made public.*⁸⁸

Poland's refusal to acknowledge any identity beyond victimhood, though the country and its citizens suffered greatly under the double occupation, has significantly compromised the history and memory of the Holocaust by forbidding truthful and accurate dialogues in which individual instances of Polish complicity in Nazi war crimes are discussed. This level of censorship harkens back to the very laws that persecuted Poles under Nazism and Stalinism, in which literature, art, speech, etc., were policed to propagate a particular narrative. The legacy Poland sought to condemn seems to be part of a vicious cycle which is now circling back and perpetuating, at least on a smaller scale, the same crimes of which they were once victims.

What implications do these populist laws carry for memory? The answer is not black and white, but a grey zone polluted with areas of erasure. With the institution of the Law and Justice Party, Poland is now advocating for causes that speak to the opposite of what they initially purported to support. Censorship, revisionist history, and other dangerous tools of memory erasure are all being used to craft a sterilized version of Polish history that lives up to the legacy of martyrdom that has been promoted for centuries. Additionally, the controversial and dangerous laws recently passed by the Polish Parliament, as well as the investigation into anti-democratic practices in the Polish government in 2016, undermine a legitimate effort to honor

⁸⁸ Translation provided by the Northwestern Holocaust Educational Foundation

the victims of the crimes of both Nazism and Stalinism without privileging one version of the narrative over the other, at least in post-Soviet Member States. This new law challenges the democratic foundations of the EU in an unproductive and harmful way; the EU must now not only contend with its exclusionary collective memory, but also the limits of its ability to intervene or intercede in cases like Poland's.

As evidenced by the law passed in early 2018, modern-day Poland has been and continues to be a hotbed of contested and silenced wartime histories in regards to events that call into question the spectrum of guilt and responsibility for Jewish deaths in Poland during World War II. Professor Gross received harsh criticism and is now, for the second time, under the threat of having his Order of Merit revoked in Poland after investigating the murder of hundreds of Jews at the hands of their Polish neighbors in Jedwabne in *Neighbors*. While other scholars and historians have continued to poke holes in Gross' evidence, e.g. unreliable witness testimony, inaccurate measurements of the barn where the Jews were burned alive versus the numbers of people that could conceivably fit inside, etc., he nevertheless brings to light an episode from one of the darkest chapters of Poland's history that had previously remained sealed away in some lost archive of memory for far too long. He received an onslaught of death threats for insinuating the Poles should assume responsibility for crimes provoked by the Germans, although committed by Poles, particularly after the hardships they endured during the German occupation as well. *Pokłosie*, a film directed by Władysław Pasikowski and released in Poland in 2012, has been met with the same near-sighted animosity that is typical in instances of fiction and historical accounts portrayed in literature and film that challenge the stories embedded in Polish public consciousness. To illustrate in an interview with the film's producer,

Jablonski, with the sweep of a hand, describes the response of the Polish media to the film. "They told us, 'You will damage the image of Poland internationally.'" The

producers have been attacked in mainstream Polish media and are fighting a lawsuit by the Polish Film Institute demanding the full repayment of its funding. Maciej Stuhr, the film star playing Józek, has been blacklisted by the Polish film council and publicly defamed as an anti-Polish propagandist. ‘It has forced Poland to ask itself a painful question,’ Jablonski said. “What does one do about dark pasts?”⁸⁹

While based on Gross’ account of the Jedwabne massacre, *Pokłosie* grapples with both the validity and shortcomings of Gross’ investigation while responding to, and occasionally siding with, the counter-arguments of Gross’ critics that maintain Poland’s innocence. Using Gross’ *Neighbors* and an edited collection of essays and interviews in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* written in response to *Neighbors* as historical guardrails and sign posts, the remainder of this chapter will interrogate the ways in which *Pokłosie* addresses the complex historicity of the present moment in Poland, framing Poles as both victims in their own right and perpetrators in the case of Jedwabne, while attending to the many shades of complicity that accompany such accusations, thus turning popular Polish martyrology on its head. In turn, this new way of examining Poland’s suffering under and participation in World War II carves out an avenue for a new kind of accessible Polish memory within the collective memory of the EU, which has not previously acknowledged the full scope of Polish persecution.

Sąsiedzi

Before attending to the cinematic structure of *Pokłosie* that lends itself to a counter-narrative responding to what is typically written in Poland’s contemporary history books, it is imperative to situate this examination within the historiography of Polish-Jewish relations in the 1940s. While he is certainly not the first to address the blurred line separating neutrality from

⁸⁹ Chizhik-Goldschmidt, Avital, “A Haunting Thriller on the Imagined Jews of Poland’s Present,” in *Haaretz*. November 3, 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-a-haunting-thriller-on-polands-present-1.5284619>

collaboration, and perhaps the lesser contested boundary between resistance and complicity, Gross' historical evaluation in *Neighbors* details the complex and precarious situation of Polish gentiles, which "prompts us to ask a question: can one, as a group with a distinctive collective identity, be at the same time a victim and a perpetrator? Is it possible to suffer and inflict suffering at the same time?"⁹⁰ Gross claims that on that summer day in Jedwabne, 1,600 Jews were marched into the town square, brutally beaten, and then forced into a barn in which they were burned alive by their neighbors, "who chose to kill and were engaged in a bloody pogrom—willing executioners."⁹¹ Gross reports that this massacre was conducted under the authority of the town's mayor and inhabitants, though perhaps (but doubtfully) influenced by previous German orders to carry out this mass killing. Gross' research does not seek to demonize Polish citizens on the whole, but to bring into public consciousness a counter-narrative to the popular "nineteenth century Polish messianism" portraying "Poland as 'the Christ of Nations,'"⁹² while still acknowledging the unbearable living conditions to which many Poles were subjected while under Nazi occupation. Thus, the paradoxical role of Poles as both victims and perpetrators is at the forefront of my dissertation's inquiry, as demonstrated by the forthcoming analysis of Pasikowski's film, which has proven to be perhaps equally as controversial as Gross' reportage.

Despite its faults, *Neighbors* does not neglect to provide adequate historical context essential to understanding the tenuous relationship between Polish Jews and non-Jews, beginning with the establishment of Poland as a safe haven for Jews under the rule of King Kazimierz III, who implemented protective policies for Jewish communities and property, followed by the evolution and encroachment of growing anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe.⁹³ Gross uses the

⁹⁰ Gross, *Neighbors*, 95-96.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 119.

⁹³ Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*.

example of Jedwabne to support his contention “that we must approach the Holocaust as a heterogeneous phenomenon” comprised of a system enabling government-institutionalized mass murder as well as “a mosaic composed of discrete episodes, improvised by local decision-makers, and hinging on unforced behavior, rooted in God-knows-what motivations, of all those who were near the murder scene at the time.”⁹⁴ While Gross acknowledges a guilty conscience that has not been fully felt or recognized in Polish mainstream society, we see the evidentiary complicity in Jedwabne presented not as an isolated incident, but as a product of the suspension and eventually the erasure of ethical codes within the established German state of exception.

However, in an attempt to offset unavoidable allegations of the vilification of Polish citizens, Gross provides an account of one of the only rescues of Jews during this particular massacre. Seven Jedwabne Jews, the only survivors Gross gives an account of, were successfully hidden by the Wyrzykowski family, who risked sharing the fate of the Jews who were beaten and burned alive, on their farm several miles outside of town.⁹⁵ What Gross resists is demonizing all Poles, but he is equally defiant in his refusal to paint this story of rescue as salvific. There were those who fervently participated in the murderous activity, those who took extreme measures to preserve Jewish lives, and those who we may like to place in the category of “bystander,” neither joining in nor actively opposing the massacre. The question raised alongside that of the dualistic role of victim and perpetrator is that of choices and non-choices. Did the bystanders who were unwilling to risk their lives and their families’ but were unwilling to participate have a choice in their presence as bystanders? Was their refusal to take part in the murder an act of resistance, or was their neutrality a demonstration of indifference to Jewish suffering? After all, “everybody who was in town on this day and in possession of a sense of sight, smell, or hearing either

⁹⁴ Gross, *Neighbors*, 81.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

participated in or witnessed the tormented deaths of the Jews of Jedwabne.”⁹⁶ Were these witnesses guilty simply by virtue of their proximity to the crime? We will see these questions raised frequently and answered seldom in *Pokłosie*.

In defense of Polish citizens in general and more opaquely the Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne, religious figures and intellectuals have fervently offered their responses to Gross’ accusations. In an interview from *Tygodnik Powszechny* entitled “A Poor Christian Looks at Jedwabne: Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński Talk with Archbishop Henryk Muszyński,” the Archbishop acknowledges Jedwabne as a tragedy, but maintains a denial of any damning evidence that would suggest Poles participated in the massacre in a way that would imply complicity. He holds tightly to the idea of Polish victimhood, but does acknowledge that the Third Reich constructed varying degrees of victims. He explains, “During the period of German occupation, two basic categories were distinguished: perpetrators and victims. And we and the Jews were victims. But one must say here right away: not in the same way and not to the same degree. The Jew was under sentence of death and was supposed to die; the Pole could survive as an *Untermensch*.”⁹⁷ However, immediately after denoting this distinction between Jew and Pole, he claims, “Nevertheless, when Jews emphasize the exceptional nature, or the uniqueness of the Holocaust, Poles are offended. It is difficult for them to accept that Jews suffered more than anyone else or to understand how, for example, the murder of an entire Jewish family differs from the murder of a Polish family for hiding Jews.”⁹⁸ While still recognizing the Jews as the primary target of the Nazis for courtesy’s sake, he attempts to level the playing field by

⁹⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁹⁷ Muszyński, Henryk, “A Poor Christian Looks at Jedwabne: Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński Talk with Archbishop Henryk Muszyński,” in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, eds. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 157.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 157.

constructing a scale on which Jewish and Polish suffering are compared and measured equally. Within this framework, he propagates what he believes to be the solution to reconciling the tenuous landscape of Polish-Jewish relations in Poland today. He proposes, “The first and indispensable step along this road, though, is to ask for forgiveness...The crime in Jedwabne--like any other crime--divides people...but the moral act of repentance can bring us closer together and can be a decisive step on the road to reconciliation.”⁹⁹ He equates the massacre in Jedwabne to “any other crime,” and inherently softens the backlash against anyone that may have participated in an “unexceptional” crime carried out under exceptional circumstances, e.g. the Holocaust. While there is an undisputed need for Polish-Jewish reconciliation so that Jewish life can perhaps one day exist as something more than just a specter in Poland, a general and ambiguous plea for forgiveness calls into question the adequacy of that response. If that were enough, would not the response to the crimes of the Holocaust have been a Truth and Reconciliation Commission rather than the first international criminal court in history?

This fixation on absolution is expanded upon in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s article from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, “Obsessed with Innocence.” She asserts, “From up close, and especially from inside, it is impossible to see certain things. The Polish obsession with innocence is impossible to notice. It is also impossible to see that the rules that govern Polish public and private debate are controlled by this pressure of innocence.”¹⁰⁰ After all, the narrative of martyrdom demands an image of guiltlessness; if Poland buckles under the “pressure of innocence,” its constructed national memory crumbles. The collective Polish memory of the massacre in Jedwabne, or lack thereof, denies the testimony of witness the weight it merits when eyewitness accounts, such as

⁹⁹ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰⁰ Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna, “Obsessed with Innocence,” in *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, eds. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 76.

the ones Gross provides, are deemed faulty in favor of maintaining a pristine façade. Tokarska-Bakir continues, “Collective memory scorns facts and appeals. Even if those facts are abundantly clear to historians, they place no obligations on human memory.”¹⁰¹ The faultiness of human memory further complicates the value of collective versus individual memory, but each individual recollection of an event with so few remaining eyewitnesses cannot be discounted so easily. This amnesiac effect that seems to have a death-grip on Poland’s collective consciousness and overlooks witness testimony has been motivated by a number of factors, but predominantly by the need to validate Polish suffering under Nazi occupation and create as much distance as possible between the exceptional crimes of the Nazis and the coerced crimes of the Poles.

A number of scholars have confronted the issues of complicity and resistance amongst Poles during the war, and in the most enlightening examinations, we are reminded to resist the temptation to resolve things to easy moral conclusions. Emmanuel Levinas makes a notable distinction between guilt and responsibility that Pasikowski employs in his film. James Hatley frames Levinas’ theory poignantly in his book *Suffering Witness*, in which he denotes, “Levinas distinguishes between guilt, which is the burden I or the other may carry for our specific actions or comportment in regard to the other, and responsibility, which is the burden upon me of the other’s vulnerability to suffering...Even if I am not guilty, I am responsible for the other.”¹⁰² This description reinforces the assertion that whether or not one is guilty in a sense that warrants punishment, he is already responsible for he who endures suffering a priori. *Pokłosie* mobilizes Levinas’ argument in the context of Polish-Jewish relations during the war and determines that the fault of the Poles was not only in their taking delight (for some) in the murder of the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 80.

¹⁰² Hatley, James, *Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility After the Irreparable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 104.

Jedwabne Jews, but in their refusal to acknowledge their responsibility to recognize the suffering in their Jewish neighbors, even after the war.

Remobilizing the Epitaph: Inverting Polish Martyrology in Władysław Pasikowski's *Pokłosie*

The looming specter of Jewish memory and history of brutality that haunts Poland is present in *Pokłosie* from the film's establishing shots through the end. Franek Kalina arrives in Poland to check in on his younger brother, Józek, after Józek's wife Jola fled to Chicago with their children to stay with Franek without revealing the reason she left. After Franek's initial arrival at the Frederic Chopin Airport in Warsaw, he travels by taxi, train, and bus to the stop just outside of his family's property in a village that remains unnamed, though clues throughout the film indicate the town is Jedwabne. The only information given outright is that the nearest town center is Gurówka. The first image we see after Franek departs the bus is a Star of David on a hangman graffitied on the bus stop. This image immediately places the viewer within an uncomfortable proximity to Polish "sentiments" or violent resentments towards Jews, specifically in more rural areas. As Franek travels on foot down a dirt road to his brother's house, he feels as though he is being watched by a figure hidden in the woods along the roadside. The camera assumes the point of view of the dark figure observing Franek, peering at him through the leaves and branches, the shot obscured by the setting sun and foliage. Franek ventures into the woods to investigate, but is knocked unconscious when he runs into a low-hanging tree branch only to awake in the middle of the night to find his luggage stolen. Within the first five minutes, the film takes a turn towards a thriller genre in its ominous lighting, jerky camera movements, suspenseful music, and the rustling of leaves beneath anonymous footsteps, reminiscent of cinematography employed in the *Blair Witch Project* and similar horror films of

the late 1990s and early 2000s. Perhaps the same foreboding music and traveling shots accompanying Franek for the remainder of the film, more specifically when he goes searching for Józek on multiple occasions or sifting through his family history, are an attempt to engage with American cinema and appeal to a larger viewer base as it was easy to predict that this film's reception in Poland would be anything but warm.

To that end, Pasikowski intersperses the film's dialogue with hints of the political and social status quo in contemporary Poland; as Franek settles into his old family home, he mentions that it all looked exactly as it used to. Józek replies, "To nie jest Ameryka. Nic się tu nie zmienia (This isn't America. Nothing changes here.)"¹⁰³ While this section will address the role of the Polish Catholic Church in crimes of the Holocaust, contemporary Polish politics, and mediation of memory at length, it is worth noting at this juncture that maintaining the status quo to which Franek refers is a product of resistance to the separation of Church and State. Patrick Michel contextualizes this resistance by explaining,

In the Polish context newness, progress and modernism simply represent categories of official discourse aimed at the disappearance of the Church. The Vatican council may have been intent on reconciling the Church with modernity, but in Poland such an undertaking would entail first dispossessing the state of the role of guardian of the meaning of modernity which it had unilaterally assumed.¹⁰⁴

While this conversation between the brothers transpires, yet another faceless figure hurls a rock through the kitchen window, leaving Franek increasingly perplexed as to why his brother is the target of such hostility in their small town.

The next morning marks the first instance of an encounter with a graveyard, which will repeatedly prove to be a site of reckoning with and restoring memory. Franek visits the graves of

¹⁰³ *Pokłosie*, (10:13).

¹⁰⁴ Michel, Patrick, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe*, trans. Alan Braley (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 77.

his parents for the first time since their death, and as Józek storms out of the cemetery, a brief and tense exchange with the town's new priest, Janusz, is audible in which Józek informs him that he will be back later to collect something with the permission of the older parish priest. Franek then pays a visit to the town police station to inquire about his stolen luggage and is presented with an injunction to fine Jozek for defacing a public road. Franek is puzzled as to why his brother would deface public property, so he visits the old road to find it not torn up, but missing large stones that appear to be mismatched and irregular in size; he later discovers they are Jewish gravestones uprooted by the Nazis. This was common practice during the war to use Jewish headstones to pave town roads.



Fig. 1. Still from Pasikowski, *Pokłosie*, (18:50).

Here we encounter the first instance of retracing in the film. Though unknowingly, Franek begins to trace his family's legacy beginning on this road and eventually ending in his mother's wheat fields, where he learns what Józek has done with the headstones. The landscape is bare and the camera focuses on Franek's feet as they plant themselves in and out of the holes in the road, which paradoxically resemble "graves" beneath the gravestones Józek has taken to his field. Each vacant plot where a stone should lay alludes to the absence of Jewish memory, both living

and deceased, and suggests that even their gravestones are either absent in this place or treated as nothing more than a place to wipe one's feet. The image of Franek's feet planted in the empty traces of Jewish gravestones represents a pivotal moment of unearthing Polish wartime memory and transplanting it into contemporary consciousness. However, at this point in the film, neither Franek nor the audience knows Józek's motivation for tearing up hundreds of stones paving a street that is no longer in use, as the tannery it leads to has not been in operation since the end of the war.

Józek's confrontation with a few disgruntled old men in a bar leads the viewer to the conclusion that tampering with an intentionally silenced Jewish history has sent ripple effects through the small town's population. In this scene, Józek sits quietly with his beer when an old man comes to his table and asks which soccer team he roots for. Józek replies "Lech" [Lech Wałęsa], and the old man headbutts him while his friends join in on beating Józek.¹⁰⁵ A thriller-
eque pursuit sequence follows when Franek enters the bar to find his brother, but instead sees a pool of blood on the ground, chairs overturned, and an empty room. He searches through the bar's back storage rooms and again, trips over several crates much like he ran into the branch in the woods at the opening of the film. The obstacles hidden in darkness along with the portentous music suggest that a specter of some sort is following on Franek's heels as he retraces his bloodline back through a dark past. The point-of-view is identical to the opening scene in which he first arrives in the town. The camera stalks Franek in the same way as the unidentified shadowy figure in the woods, the camera nearly eye level with him, panning from one side of his face to another as if the person behind the camera can see him (Franek) but he cannot see them. He finds Józek beaten bloody and being tended to by the bartender in the alley behind the

¹⁰⁵ Lech Wałęsa was the president of Poland from 1990-1995, received the Nobel Prize in 1983, and co-founded the *Solidarność* movement. Rooting for Lech would imply Józek's progressive political stance.

building and Franek demands to know why Józek is the target of these repeated attacks.

Józek leads Franek to their mother's field through the woods, which we will see paralleled in *Pa negre* in Chapter 3, as secrets are always revealed in the woods in these two films. Józek reveals he has taken up the Jewish gravestones from the roads and planted them upright in his family's field, making their family's land a reconstituted cemetery. He discloses that he has recovered 328 headstones that the Germans tore up from the synagogue's cemetery and used the stones to reinforce the roads. The road was covered in debris until 1955 when the road to the tannery was reopened and the stones were discovered; the Poles paved over the road and its foundation remained unnoticed until "the floods" came and revealed the stones. The theme of floods will be central to analyzing the conclusion of the film, but it serves as the first clear biblical reference in this scene. In the Book of Genesis, the "great flood" has generally been interpreted as a metaphor for cleansing. In the case of Poland, the flood Józek mentions is a harbinger of truth, exposing an act perpetrated by Poles of concealing the desecration of Jewish memory. Józek tells Franek he purchased more stones from neighboring farms as well, whose owners were using them as work surfaces and even had them in outhouses, which ultimately explains the loan he tried to take borrow against the farm. This transaction addresses the dark irony of what it means to leverage property that never rightfully belonged to Józek's family to recover the memory and dignity of the Jews from which the farm was taken. It is clear that one of the primary motivating factors in Poland's failure to acknowledge the massacre in Jedwabne as an event carried out by Poles themselves was the impending confiscation of property formerly occupied by Jewish families. Inversely, Józek, too, "confiscates" Jewish property for the purpose of reappropriation; he pays for or "steals" the Jewish gravestones depending on their location in order to transport them to a makeshift cemetery in his wheat fields and, although he does this

unknowingly at first, restores the property to its rightful owner. With this unearthing of the gravestones from under the paved streets and reburial in a cemetery of sorts, Józek and Franek eventually face an even more challenging predicament: the excavation and memorialization of the bodies themselves.

Upon seeing the erected gravestones for the first time, Franek is furious with Józek and understands why his wife and children fled from their town so urgently. Józek walks Franek through the fields, reading names from the epitaphs, remobilizing the memory of Jews who had literally been paved over in the annals of Polish history. Józek's ability to read the engraved text on the stones indicates he has learned Hebrew. Franek points out, "Jest po żydowsku (It's in Jewish)," to which Józek responds, "...po hebrajsku (in Hebrew)." ¹⁰⁶ Józek acquires some proficiency in Hebrew without any formal training in order to be able to identify each gravestone since the language barrier between Hebrew and Polish adds yet another layer of "unnaming" or stripping the Jews of a recognizable Polish identity. The difference in the way the brothers reference the language spoken and written by the Jews that once inhabited their town is evident; Franek represents the disregard commonly seen in Poland for naming things associated with Judaism properly (e.g. assuming the language is called "Jewish") while Józek properly names both the bodies once buried under the gravestones and the language they took with them to the grave.

The same phenomenon is evidenced in Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*, in which he conducts extensive, and occasionally problematic, interviews with survivors and witnesses of the horrors of the Holocaust. One such interview focuses on the account of a Polish peasant, Czesław Borowi, who provides the details of his memory of the first convoy that arrived at

¹⁰⁶ *Pokłosie*, (31:14).

Treblinka, one of the six Nazi death camps with the second-highest death toll next to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from Warsaw. Lanzmann inquires as to whether or not the peasants continued working as per usual while the transports arrived, to which Borowi replies that they continued working a bit more unwillingly than usual, but they worked nonetheless out of fear that the Nazis would arrest them as well. When Borowi describes the sounds at the train station as “Ra-ra-ra-ra-ra,” Lanzmann asks him to clarify what that sound indicates.¹⁰⁷ Borowi responds that the transports “spoke Jew,” while Lanzmann laughs and asks if Borowi himself “speaks Jew,” which he claims he does not. At several points throughout the interview, we get a point-of-view shot from Lanzmann’s perspective, allowing us to confront Czesław ourselves, as he places his hand on Borowi’s shoulder and “launches into conspiratorial banter with Polish peasants and villagers that seems designed to earn their trust and create an artificial community of feeling—giving them enough rope on which to hang themselves.”¹⁰⁸ Based on Lanzmann’s interview, Pasikowski is stunningly accurate in his depiction of the attitude toward Jews in rural Poland.



Fig. 2. Still from Pasikowski, *Pokłosie*, (31:14).

¹⁰⁷ *Shoah*, DVD, Directed by Claude Lanzmann (France: Parafrance, 1985), (1:06:15).

¹⁰⁸ Boswell, Matthew, *Holocaust Impiety in Literature, Popular Music and Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 27.

Figure 2 captures Franek's first encounter with his brother's self-made gravesite. The shot, like many others in which Józek walks his fields, is strikingly pastoral and evocative of biblical images. Józek stands like a shepherd tending to his flock, a Christ-like figure shepherding Jewish memory. Additionally, the stance the brothers assume in this image is indicative of the tension between Polish Catholics and Jews reaching back through several centuries. Józek stands in direct opposition to Franek, who embodies, though not as virulently as some of the townspeople, a "fear enunciated routinely by Polish Catholics in this era," which

was the threat supposedly posed by the Jewish people. Distrust and hatred of Jews was a depressingly common feature in Western society as a whole in these years. Such attitudes were rooted in centuries-old Christian assumptions, including the belief that the Jewish people were collectively responsible for the death of Christ. Over the course of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, this traditional anti-Judaism yielded ground to a more pernicious set of ideas known as antisemitism.¹⁰⁹

The resurfacing of Jewish memory in *Pokłosie* is heavily steeped in religious visual representations.



Fig. 3. Still from Pasikowski, *Pokłosie*, (34:37).

¹⁰⁹ Alvis, Robert E., *White Eagle, Black Madonna: One Thousand Years of the Polish Catholic Tradition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 207.

Figure 3 depicts Józek's response to Franek's interrogation of why he feels the responsibility to restore the gravestones. "There's no one left to look after them." This assumption of responsibility to act as a shepherd who must essentially watch over the Jewish memory so quickly abandoned after the massacre in Jedwabne is not unique to this instance. Polish poet Tadeusz Różewicz, whose poetry will be examined in Chapter 4, accepts his responsibility as a witness to the Nazi atrocities in his poem "Alarm Clock,"¹¹⁰

I the poet—the shepherd of life
have now become the shepherd of the dead

Józek's self-proclaimed role as another "shepherd of the dead" is deeply imbricated with references to images in the Torah depicting Moses leading the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, much like Józek ushers the memory of the Jews out of the depths of history. As Józek reads off the names of each headstone, he touches the gravestones almost as if he is absorbing the words through his fingers rather than his eyes. He traverses the boundaries between visual and haptic memory in a process similar to reading braille. He holds each stone in the same way many films have depicted Moses carrying the tablets bearing the Ten Commandments down from Mt. Sinai. The landscape of *Pokłosie* is ripe with references to the Hebrew Bible, which raises a number of issues regarding the tension between current Judeo-Christian or Judeo-Catholic relations in Eastern Europe being that upon its release, this film played to a Polish audience that was almost exclusively Catholic.

¹¹⁰ Różewicz, Tadeusz, *Sobbing Superpower: Selected Poems of Tadeusz Różewicz*, trans. Joanna Trzeciak (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 256.

In the scene immediately following Franek's first visit to the cemetery, Józek serves a large plate of bacon for himself and Franek. After returning home from tending to the Jewish gravesites, one cannot help but notice the reference to Jewish and Catholic tensions, as pork is *treyf* or forbidden by the laws of Kashrut. After dinner, Franek retires to bed and we see him frantically scrubbing his white shirt in the bathroom sink; he cannot seem to scrub his shirt hard enough or restore it to its original pristine condition when he first arrived in Poland. This act of scrubbing his white shirt resurfaces in other parts of the film, and is always preceded by a some sort of confession or revelation. Pasikowski repeatedly employs Franek's sullied white shirt as a metaphor for Poland's attempt to sanitize its history while remnants of its past are still looking them in the eye, refusing to be washed away by curated political narratives. I will explore a nearly identical metaphor in *Pa negre* in Chapter 3, in which the main character's family explains how they scrub infected blankets after sick or deceased people have used them, but they still retain the stench of death.

A series of lesser events transpire, but things reach a fever pitch when several unnamed hostile townspeople set the cemetery/field on fire. The scene begins with Franek's white shirt, freshly scrubbed, hanging on a clothesline to dry as he retires to bed. A flickering yellow light becomes increasingly visible against the backdrop of the white shirt, tarnishing its pristine condition once again. The reflection of the flames grow larger as the Kalina family field is enveloped in flames. The fire represents a second burning brought on by a contemporary Polish society. The first burning was that of Jewish bodies in the barn in Jedwabne detailed by Jan Gross in *Neighbors*, followed by the burning of Jewish memory as the gravestones are enveloped in flames. Józek and Franek mourn this compounded destruction yelling "Pali się! Pali się! (It is burning! It is burning!)," yet the firemen and townspeople refuse to help. Perhaps this

indifference stems from the belief that a revival of Jewish memory of the Holocaust is seen as a ‘Jewish attack’ on Poland’s reputation and honor.”¹¹¹ The last shot in these scene employs an unmistakable reference to Jedwabne. Any doubt that Pasikowski is alluding to this particular massacre is erased when we are confronted with a shot of a barn burning to the ground.



Fig. 4. Still from Pasikowski, *Pokłosie*, (1:09:16).

The attack on the cemetery compels Franek to visit the Municipal Hall in Gurówka to inquire about the status of their family’s farm, why it does not rightly belong to Józek, and why their family’s home has become a target for violence. Another instance of pursuit or haunting presents itself as Franek takes the road out of the country and into Gurówka. He is followed by a mysterious driver in a blue Ford Granada who attempts to run him off the road and/or run him over on several occasions; the driver cannot be identified through the tinted windshield and unstable shots, but the viewer may presume it is the stalker that has been following Franek since his arrival. The message is clear: Józek has become a burden on the town in his attempts to

¹¹¹ Struve, “Eastern Experience and Western Memory,” 21.

investigate Jedwabne's muddled history and Franek's presence and assistance in the matter is unwelcome. The answer to Franek's inquiry is found in the town's Municipal Hall in the archives.

The viewer is confronted with two scenes juxtaposed alongside one another: Franek at the town registry sifting through the archives of maps of the town before and after the war, and Józek cleaning the faces of the gravestones he tends to in his field. Franek begins to read the names of the previous owners, all Jewish, of each of the neighboring farms while the alternating shots of Józek reading the names on the headstones serve as mirror images. Franek navigates dense maps and records to rectify the discrepancy in his father's deed (the date of acquisition and plot number do not match the plot map). The Kalina farm used to be on a much less desirable plot of land down by the river; the current farm was Jewish land taken from Awraham Wimelman. As Franek reads this name aloud from the record, the camera cuts to an image of Józek tracing the Hebrew letters of the name inscribed on a recovered gravestone, which he reads aloud as the "son of Reb Awraham Wimelman." This reading of the family names on both the legal documents and gravestones serves not only as an act of discovery, but also as a restitution of a lost memory by restoring individual names to those that had been stripped of their very identities, even intergenerationally.

After learning the truth about the ownership of his family's farm, Franek seeks out Stara Palka or "Old Lady Palka," an old neighbor from whom Franek once stole rabbits to keep them from being killed, in the hospital to ask if she remembered what happened to the town's Jews and who was involved. She speaks warmly to him and recalls a young Jewish boy that lived nearby and whom all of the girls in the town would pursue before the Germans deported all of the Jews. The tone in her recollection of a Jewish life that is now painfully absent in Poland

depicts the moral predicament in determining guilt or responsibility. As a young woman, she was sympathetic to the Jews, indicated by her endearment of the Jewish children in her neighborhood. Her haggard appearance appears to be deeply influenced by the weight of their wartime fate, yet she was immobilized by the fear of or pressure from her Polish neighbors and did not intervene to advocate on behalf of the Jewish victims. After this visit, Franek grows suspicious of her claim that the Jews were deported by the Germans, and convinces Józek to visit the old site of their family's original home across the river, as indicated by the records in the archives of the Municipal Hall.

Józek and Franek revisit their old family home in the night near the swamplands to dig up the remains of the Jews they believe are buried there after a heated conversation with Pan Sudecki, an old man in the town who has been increasingly hostile to Józek. He tells the brothers to look around their house for answers to what became of Jedwabne's Jews in the 1940s. As they dig, it begins pouring rain, filling the pit up to their knees as they continue to shovel furiously. One cannot help but to recognize the allusion, again, to the flood that prompted the construction of Noah's Ark in the Torah. The deluge of rain in the midst of an "unburial" suggests a sort of biblical reckoning, as the town can no longer evade responsibility for the dead beneath its soil once the bodies have been brought to the surface. Digging up the bones of the murdered Jews of Jedwabne is performing the act of revealing the site of trauma for Poland to reckon with; Pasikowski is doing what the Polish government will not: disinterring a history of complicity. The camera cuts back to the brothers, both up to their knees in water and mud digging up the floors of their father's old home. Franek pulls up the first remnants of bodies buried beneath the floors of their family's old home; he holds a skull in his hand, an image reminiscent of Hamlet

holding “poor Yorick’s” skull. The camera mimics the act of a shovel digging into the earth as it drops down to the mud and back up as Franek and Józek continue to pull up bones.

As the brothers continue digging, the camera cuts to a shot of the parish priest dropping dead in his bedroom, presumably of a heart attack. The beating heart of the Polish Catholic Church is instantiated in burying anti-Semitism and fails to function, as it currently stands, when the crypt is opened and a confrontation with history becomes inevitable. Conversely, Józek and Franek reaffirm their own faiths as they recite the Hail Mary after the first few skulls are pulled up from the pit. An old woman smoking a cigarette, who seems to be living in the woods, appears at the site of the to give her testimony before the victims themselves and to the children, Franek and Józek, that must inherit the shameful legacy of their parents. She reveals the torturous process of dehumanization and murder that ensued on July 10, 1941 in this small town in the Łomża district, beginning with the marching of the Jews into the town square, the savage beatings that took place in the streets, and finally the burning of all of the remaining Jews. Her account of the atrocity incorporates both Gross’ and his critics’ retellings of the order of events, and she spares no details about children that nearly escaped the flames but were thrown back into the flames, their shrieks piercing the ash-filled air. She claims that she pleaded for the lives of the Jews and stood at the site weeping as the murders took place, but was silenced by one of the townspeople who told her she could join them inside if she preferred. Her testimony places the Poles that might have resisted the massacre on a spectrum of victimhood themselves, while also allocating guilt to the parties that facilitated the burning of the barn with 120 lives inside. This number, however, is much lower than the actual death toll since “...the forensic experts estimated that there were no more than 480 victims and the official investigation put their number at

300.”¹¹² Essentially, *Pokłosie* occupies a unique space in Polish cinema in its insistence on forcing a Polish audience to reckon with a past that has long been not only ignored but also denied rather than allowing Poland on the whole to accept its victimhood without recognizing its complicity. The old woman’s testimony before the brothers and the bones gives the audience a faint hope that the truth has been unearthed and some sort rectification may follow.

This hope is subverted by the brutality of the final scene. In the concluding moments after a bitter scuffle between the brothers, Franek leaves to return to Chicago, but not before kicking in the side of the bus stop bearing the Star of David hanging from the gallows, as we saw in the opening shots. His bus is stopped by Justyna Sudecki, a friend of Józek’s estranged wife Jola and granddaughter of Pan Sudecki, who brings him back to his family home which has been transformed into a crime scene. Franek makes his way through the crowd and in to the barn only to find it as a site of death once more.



Fig. 5. Still from Pasikowski, *Pokłosie*, (1:41:54).

¹¹² Chodakiewicz, Marek Jan, *The Massacre in Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European monographs, no. 655., 2005), 129.

The film ends with an ironic crucifixion; Franek opens the door to the barn finds Józek hanging from four nails in his wrists and feet, nailed to the door inside. This is a clear inversion of Polish martyrology by Pasikowski: Józek, a Catholic Pole, shepherded and recovered the memory of the Jews, so he was crucified in the same way that the “Jews killed Christ.” This scene also simultaneously bolsters and challenges typical Polish martyrology in using Józek as a Christ-like figure who sacrifices himself for the sake of preserving Jewish memory. Perhaps Pasikowski is suggesting that if Poland truly wants to live up to its self-proclaimed reputation as the “Christ of Nations,” it must start with confronting its own truth about its role in the Holocaust.

Pasikowski’s indictment follows the demands from “the 1990s, that Poland had to confront the problematic aspects of its history in World War II...because the Holocaust had become an international *lieu de memoire* of high moral significance. A country can only expect proper recognition if it is able to engage in a critical confrontation with its past against this backdrop.”¹¹³ Pasikowski, thus, presents the case for a recognition of Poland’s troubled past in light of its brash defiance to do so in response to the EU’s disregard for Poland’s wartime suffering. In the case of *Pokłosie*, it is Józek, the self-appointed shepherd of Jewish memory, that challenges Polish historicity as the country itself has written it that suffers as a Christ-figure at the hands of the Poles. This inversion of Polish martyrology contradicts the hegemonic narrative deeply embedded in contemporary Polish culture and refuses to concede to the myth that Poles did not participate in the murder of Polish Jewry, while still acknowledging the impossible situation of those like Stara Palka and the old woodswoman who opposed and were horrified by the action of those who set the barn alight and threw children to the flames.

¹¹³ Struve, “Eastern Experience and Western Memory,” 51.

Disentangling Martyrdom and Memory: Conclusion without Resolution

In an attempt to reconcile the grey area between resistance and cooperation among non-Jewish citizens within Nazi-occupied territories in Europe, Holocaust Studies has grappled with the temptation, or rather vain hope, to map such citizens neatly onto the “perpetrators-victims-bystanders” axis.¹¹⁴ The desire for a clear dividing line between these three categories is rendered impossible for a number of reasons, chiefly because the distinction between history, memory, and historical memory of the Holocaust have been conflated in the Polish context. According to Pierre Nora, “Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name.... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”¹¹⁵ Poland’s current repressive legislation is not only navigating the tension between history and memory, but devising ways to use a unilateral memory of the Holocaust, that of innocent Poles victimized by the Nazis, to bolster a national history that reconstructs events in way that propagates their image of the ultimate European martyr on a public stage. Poland’s grasping at the loose threads of history to weave them into a curated tapestry of victimhood is predicated on the Catholic Church’s domination of Poland’s political and social memory and Poland’s determination to own its memory of the Holocaust separate of the collective European memory narrative of the war. This project will ultimately fail, because as Nora rightly asserts,

Memory is blind to all but the group it binds-which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Hilberg, Raul, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York, NY: Aaron Asher Books, 1992).

¹¹⁵ Nora, Pierre, "Between Memory and History," 8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

Privileging examples of Polish martyrdom (e.g. Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the priest in Auschwitz who sacrificed himself for a man who had been selected for death who did not want to orphan his four young children) and suppressing examples of Polish complicity (e.g. Poles who sold out their Jewish neighbors for rewards, or who outright joined in the eradication of Jewish life like the case of Jedwabne) has created the façade of a pristine historical narrative in European consciousness.

The backlash against *Poklosie* exemplifies the resistance to confronting historical facts that would contaminate or muck up the waters of victimhood that are to remain unspoiled. The truth stands that there is no water left unpolluted in war, and to deny information about murders and massacres carried out on grand or “small” scales is to produce a sterile version of history. *Poklosie* depicts the story Gross intended to tell in *Neighbors* while incorporating more faithful facts from critics that revised Gross’ statistics and data, particularly in regards to the number of people that were killed, although the film underestimates the number at 120 rather than 300-480, but well under Gross’ proposed 1600. Additionally, Pasikowski memorializes Jewish memory rather than consigning it to the realm of resentment in Polish public consciousness. He takes a bold step in the direction of unbuttoning the stranglehold of memory in Poland by dragging the story of the massacre in Jedwabne out of the dregs of abandoned memory. This process, while excruciating, acknowledges that recognition is the turning point in the direction of restoration and *Poklosie* boldly ventures into that forbidden territory arguably with the intention of gaining recognition of Poland’s conflicted past from its European neighbors. Broken silence and unburying renders Józek crucified and viewers are left with the question: what will happen to his bones? Moreover, what will happen to the very real and tangible bones of those the film sought to unearth if conversations around complicity continue to be stifled?

The uncompromising desire for recognition undoubtedly originates from Poland's 123-year struggle for sovereignty in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its restoration of independence is inextricably bound up in its relationship to Catholicism, illustrated by Josef Pilsudski's victory (referred to as the "Miracle on the Vistula"), which was described by Archbishop Kakowski in a pastoral letter as such: "'God gazed upon the oppression of his people in slavery, heard their laments, showed mercy and stood at our side in order to crumble our unbearable bonds and give us the free, independent, and united lands of our fathers.'" ¹¹⁷

Archbishop Kakowski's retelling is strangely reminiscent of the Book of Exodus in which the Hebrew G-d heard the cries of his people, the Hebrews who had been slaves in Egypt for centuries, and commanded Moses to demand of Pharaoh, "Let my people go." By tackling these frictions between Catholicism and Judaism full-force, Pasikowki's film assumes the role of one of Poland's few critical narratives,

characterized by the fact that [they] include the experiences of the victims of violence and injustice perpetrated by one's own people. They are in constant tension with traditional heroic narratives of national history, which by contrast focus on the heroism of the nation, its struggles, sufferings and those who sacrificed their lives for the *patria*." ¹¹⁸

Pokłosie does not shy away from instructing the Polish government and Catholic Church that they must take ownership of their own checkered past both preceding and during the Holocaust before they can legitimately pursue recognition of Polish suffering on a global forum.

Poland's topography and citizens were unquestionably jarred out of a period of re-establishing themselves as a sovereign state after over a century of statelessness and violently shoved into the cataclysm that became the Holocaust. Between German and Soviet invasions and partitions, the construction of six death camps (all of which were operated exclusively on Polish

¹¹⁷ Alvis, Robert E., *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, 192.

¹¹⁸ Struve, "Eastern Experiences and Western Memory," 44.

soil), and the cheapening of Polish life altogether under Nazi occupation, Poland became the crucible for persecution in the mid-twentieth century. It would be absurd to suggest that Poland's wounds could or should heal within a particular timeframe comparable to other countries that were invaded by the Nazis because no other country's soil was forced to absorb the ashes of an unconscionable number of European Jews, Polish Catholics, political dissidents, mentally and physically infirmed, Romas, and homosexuals. Poland's political history has not been called to the stand to defend its position as victim, but rather its collective historical memory has been called for cross-examining in the wake of denialist and borderline revisionist history which claims Poland played no part in Nazi atrocities. The conflict at hand is that Poland has acted uniformly as a nation in the public eye of the European Union, but nuanced divisions between Polish elites, post-communists, those in opposition of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), rural farmers, educators and historians has made it increasingly difficult to assign responsibility for the recent laws and not-so-recent practices that have inhibited the practice of memory transfer. While the conversation surrounding Poland's contested wartime history is not a new sensation, enforcing legal retribution for investigating and reporting on historical facts is profoundly troubling and negates the very tenets of the democratic European institution to which Poland has ascribed. Sanitization of national memory is not a national phenomenon at all; rather, it is produced from a political and religious structure that allows for the evasion of culpability and responsibility by reconstructing projected national memories that abide a preferred historical narrative, as we will come to see in the following chapter in the Spanish film, *Pa negre*.

CHAPTER 3: DIVERTING NATIONAL MEMORY IN SPAIN: STATE-SANCTIONED VIOLENCE IN *PA NEGRE* AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Tangled Histories: Mirroring Holocaust Memory & the Spanish Civil War

Spain's accession into the European Union in 1986 followed a much simpler trajectory than Poland's decade-long appeal to join the ranks of a developing democratic vision of Europe. The process was fairly fluid and uncomplicated, as Spain had already declared its commitment to democracy in the years of *Transición española a la democracia* (Spanish transition to democracy) after Franco's death in 1975. That declaration, however, was predicated on the *pacto de silencio* discussed in the introduction, a governmentally-imposed "agreement" amongst Spanish citizens to put to bed the crimes of the Spanish Civil War and essentially outlaw the discussion of individual, collective, and national memory of the war in the name of progress. Silence surrounding twentieth-century Spanish history has a long legacy; it began after Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, which ultimately "created a culture of repression and fear, particularly for vanquished Republicans in the early post-Civil War years."¹¹⁹ Even with Spain's turn to democracy, this culture of repression persisted as "both Spain's transition-era and democratic governments operated under an implicit pact of silence that continued to prevent a free exchange about the Spanish Civil War and Spain's relevance to the Second World War."¹²⁰

While Poland effectively had to abandon its national memory of Soviet occupation in order to ascribe to the more widely accepted version of nineteenth-century European history embraced by the EU, Spain had far less to contribute to the prevalent topic of World War II and therefore sought to find avenues to insert itself into this larger conversation of Holocaust memory. The Holocaust as an "entry ticket" into European memory essentially places Spain,

¹¹⁹ Brenneis, Sara J., *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

which has long been considered Europe's internal "other," further on the fringes of wartime memory, prompting this desire to participate in a shared wartime experience. To illustrate, Kai Struve claims that "the Holocaust could be the first and most important element of an emerging global memory."¹²¹ Accepting and "[I]nviting Spain's collective and individual memories of the Second World War, Nazism, and the Holocaust to participate is consequential to the project of building a transnational European culture of memory."¹²² A Holocaust-centered conversation conveniently offered an opportunity to shift focus from Spain's national memory as it pertained to the Spanish Civil War. Poland's national memory under Soviet occupation was disembodied and disavowed, whereas Spain's national memory under Franco was diverted.

In his examination of José Javier Abasolo's *Nadie es inocente*, Stewart King alleges that "with the victory of the *Partido Popular*...the mid-1990s witnessed for the first time since the death of Franco a sustained and widespread public debate concerning Spain's past."¹²³ The Partido Popular effectively "threatened nationhood" by "openly raising the issue of history"¹²⁴ and launching a push to contend with Spain's fraught history of its civil war, the memory of which was abandoned in the post-Franco era. This push ran concurrently alongside Spain's assumption of a diplomatic position in its newly established relationship with Israel after joining the EU. In 2000, Spain became an active member of the Stockholm International Conference to recognize victims of the Holocaust on a global stage. It initially chose to commemorate the events of the Holocaust on the 27th day of Nissan on the Jewish calendar, usually falling in early-mid April (also referred to as Yom Ha'Shoah), but later decided to continue

¹²¹ Struve, "Eastern Experience and Western Memory," 44.

¹²² Ibid., 26.

¹²³ King, "The Criminal Past," 243.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 244

commemoration on January 27th, marking the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.¹²⁵ The shift towards an International Holocaust Remembrance Day indicates a departure from the Israeli remembrance day, which is recognized both in Israel and internationally. While Spain's government, among other members of the conference, sought to honor the memory of the lives destroyed at the hands of the Nazis, these ceremonies were not without their problems.

In his essay "The Voices of Sepharad," Alejandro Baer presents one such example of a candle-lighting ceremony in which one candle was lit in remembrance of the 1.5 million children murdered in the Holocaust.¹²⁶ The candle was reflected infinitely in a series of mirrors, creating the illusion that there could be one candle for each of these faceless victims. The children were distinctly not identified as Jewish and were simply referred to as innocent victims of the Third Reich. In omitting the Jewish identity of the children, Spain was able to create a less clearly defined image of victims of Nazi atrocities, which then opened an avenue for Spain to assert itself as a nation wounded by the Nazi regime by laying claim to the memory of Spanish victims in Mauthausen. This is precisely where Brenneis' investigation of the "confusion between the collective memory of the Holocaust and that of the Spanish Civil War"¹²⁷ becomes so pivotal. The Spaniards interned and killed at Mauthausen were, first and foremost, almost exclusively victims of Franco's violently oppressive regime. Spanish Republicans were expelled or fled from Spain, often to France, and met various fates ranging from immediate imprisonment in camps to enlisting themselves as part of the Résistance. Many were captured thereafter by the Germans and sent to camps such as Mauthausen and Buchenwald, where thousands were exploited and murdered. Jorge Semprún, an organizer for the Communist Party of Spain and French Resistance

¹²⁵ Baer, "The Voids of Sepharad," 129.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 129-30.

¹²⁷ Brenneis, *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 30.

fighter/Spanish exile, recalls his Buchenwald uniform in *The Long Voyage*, in which he dons “not yet a yellow star but a red triangle pointing downward to the heart, my red triangle signifying Spanish Red, with an “S” above it,) indicating his affiliation with the Spanish left, although his Spanish citizenship had been stripped.¹²⁸ Spain’s participation in the commemoration of Nazi victims, including Spaniards who suffered in the German camps, raises the question of 1) modeling commemorative practices after countries that suffered under Nazi-occupation in order to establish a cosmopolitan Holocaust memory, or a memory that is accessible to those not directly implicated in the events in question, and 2) expelling political opponents and thus stripping them of their Spanish citizenship, and later circling back to claim their experience in the camps as uniquely Spanish.

Similar to Poland’s erasure from the map of Europe for 123 years before regaining its sovereignty in 1918 at the end of World War I, Spain, too, has existed on the fringes of European memory for decades. Ian Patterson places Spain on the periphery of European consciousness in his book *Guernica and Total War* in which he claims, “When the civil war broke out, in July 1936, Spain scarcely figured in most people’s awareness of European events. It tended to be thought of as changeable, hot, self-absorbed...and generally marginal to the modern world,” supporting the notion that Spain “generally seemed to be outside the main current of European politics.”¹²⁹ It is no wonder, then, that their membership in the European Union spurred a deep-seated need to “belong” to the Western European memory project, namely the curated collective memory of the Holocaust. According to Brenneis,

Spain is and has been frequently sidelined on the geographic and conceptual margins of Europe. As the rest of Europe began to awaken to the tragedy of the Holocaust in the 1960s, Spain was still ruled by a dictator who censored and controlled the free flow of information. While the late 1970s and early 1980s saw the beginning of a trend towards

¹²⁸ Semprún, Jorge, *The Long Voyage*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: The Overlook Press, 2005), 182.

¹²⁹ Patterson, Ian, *Guernica and Total War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8-9.

Holocaust commemoration in the rest of Europe, Spain was just emerging from its dictatorship, and committed to moving forward with the formation of a democratic government unencumbered by the past.¹³⁰

Spain's political and cultural move to imbricate itself in Brenneis' "transnational European culture of memory" has inspired a narrative of national history that fits into a widely accepted collective memory of the Holocaust, and also an avoidance of their own burdened history of violence under Franco. This problematic dichotomy is reflected in recent documentaries that attempt to justify this divisive approach to Spain's national memory on a public platform.

Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis' documentary *Las fosas del silencio* and Alfonso Domingo and Itziar Bernaola's documentary *Las fosas del olvido* both address the burial not only of the physical bodies decimated by the Spanish Rebels, but also the memory of shame that would accompany an honest confrontation with Spain's past. The production of these documentaries came at a pivotal moment in Spain, under the conservative government of Jose Maria Azanar, and the *Partido Popular*, who was superseded in 2004 by Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and the Socialist Party. Talks of excavations were only starting to reach the surface of public consciousness, but this political moment marked a turning point in Spanish historical memory as movement towards confrontation with Spain's wartime past took flight. The more contemporary dialogue about this memory, if one can call it a dialogue at all, acknowledges a staunch resolution to separate Franco's version of fascism from Nazism but, ironically, attempts to mirror discussions about the Holocaust to possibly detract from the crimes of the Spanish Civil War and maintain relevancy within the cosmopolitan European memory of the Holocaust.

Las fosas del silencio does not explicitly draw a line between Fascist Spain and Nazi Germany, but it does beg the question of how Spain can participate in commemorative practices

¹³⁰ Brenneis, *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 26.

and acknowledge the crimes of the Nazis while simultaneously forgetting the crimes of Franco. The second segment of the documentary entitled “Las listas” focuses heavily on the excavation and exhumation of mass graves in Spain, a recent phenomenon prompted by the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*. Before the first site is opened, we see the shadow of the excavator hovering over the grave before biting into the earth.¹³¹ This effect of the shadow of the backhoe alludes to the looming specter of fascism that devoured its home soil, but this time, perhaps, there is the anticipation of some kind of resolution. Pablo Duque is one of many children of survivors interviewed in the film and taken to the newly erected gravesite of his mother, where emotion overtakes him. There has still been no motion toward any sort of judicial repair, but the re-appropriation of bodies into “proper” and marked gravesites acts, in this case, as a stand-in for justice; if prosecutions of perpetrators are still inconceivable, the victims can at least reclaim their names and have their existence acknowledged.

While documentaries addressing these issues act as a form of resistance to the tradition of “*desmemoria*, or form of willful historical amnesia, which in the interest of national harmony...had restricted the discussion and debate of the violent repression which occurred during the Civil War and dictatorship,”¹³² this attempt at public acknowledgment of Rebel crimes is insufficient. The film assumes a passive voice by focusing solely on the victims without attributing responsibility to the perpetrators. Additionally, the excavation mirrors similar efforts to disinter bodies of victims of World War II in mass graves in Poland and Russia (typically bodies of those murdered by the Einsatzgruppen or mass summary executions like Katyn). Essentially, the film’s introduction of the mass graves into Spanish public consciousness allows us to examine the aforementioned confusion of Spanish Civil War and Holocaust memory in this

¹³¹ *Las fosas del silencio*, “Capítulo 2: Las Listas,” Dirección por M. Armengou and R. Belis, (Spain, 2003).

¹³² King, “The Criminal Past,” 244.

peculiar mirror of Eastern European memory of mass graves. The following examination of a contemporary Spanish film interrogates the complexity of documenting Spanish national memory and the structural overlap of depicting ghostly landscapes and bodies traumatized by the state mirrored in Pasikowski's *Pokłosie*.

“Está curada la herida?/Has your wound healed?”: Questions of Healing and Haunting in Agustí Villaronga's *Pa negre*

Agustí Villaronga's 2010 film *Pa negre* (*Black Bread*) tackles the complex and multi-faceted palimpsest of guilt written into the history of the Spanish Civil War. The contemporary contextual framework for the production of this film is deeply embedded in the historical moment in which it was produced. The years between 2006-2008 ushered in an era of economic and political unrest in Spain as Parliament announced an official bill condemning Franco's rule and requiring the removal of Franco-era statues and monuments in 2007 and Spain was hurled into the greatest economic crisis since 1993 in 2009.¹³³ Catalonia's demand for greater regional autonomy starting in 2006 was undoubtedly influential in *Pa negre*'s production. Though the name of the town and exact date are never disclosed in the film, the viewer can easily identify the setting in the first few minutes of dialogue: a rural village in ~1940 Catalonia, also indicated by the title *Pa negre* versus *Pan negro*, presumably just months, or perhaps a couple of years, after the conclusion of the Civil War. The director's decision to film the language entirely in Catalan introduced a new take on the war in that a film spoken in Catalan had never represented Spain in an international context. Additionally, the language locates the reflection on memory, or lack thereof, in the specific geopolitical context of Catalonia. In employing the technique of

¹³³ “Spain profile- Timeline,” in *BBC News*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17955805>

narrating the plot through what Sarah Wright refers to as “the innocent, uncorrupted nature of the child’s gaze,” a popular plot device in 2010s Spain (e.g. *Pan’s Labyrinth*), the film is immediately filtered through a lens of guiltlessness, which is intentionally soliciting a certain measure of sympathy for the citizens of Catalonia from the viewer and erases the role of the perpetrators.¹³⁴ Wright draws attention to the increasing popularity of children as narrators in film and interconnectedness of childhood trauma and the Spanish civil war in her assertion that “[I]t may make sense to speak of a new *cine con niño*, a genre in itself. The child might be seen as a lingua franca which allows directors to present an attractive and comprehensible face to investigations of the Spanish past (both for Spanish audiences and internationally).”¹³⁵ The memory of the war as told by *Pa negre* is isolated both in the use of a child narrator and the focus on a singular regional memory, Catalonia’s, which does not present a full contextual analysis of Spain’s wartime history. These directorial choices essentially limit the scope through which the viewer can consider the way in which Catalonia was affected by or participated in the war.

The use of shadows in *Pa negre* and *Pokłosie* is a predominant device that alludes to the haunting presence of the memory of the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, and the families’ dichotomous roles in matters of violence. The cloaked figure that attacks Dionís and Culet in the opening scene of *Pa negre* finds its parallel in the shadowy figure that stalks Franek in the “cursed woods” outside of his family’s farm when he visits Józek in *Pokłosie*. Franek is repeatedly pursued, and eventually attacked, by a seemingly invisible figure throughout the film as well as a faceless driver of a small car that he frequently sees on his tail. This shadow, unbeknownst to Franek, impedes his investigation of the town’s heinous murder of local Jews

¹³⁴ Wright, Sarah, *The child in Spanish cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 90.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 93.

and his family's participation in the act. It functions as a chimerical gatekeeper of prohibited Polish memory. Correspondingly, Andreu encounters the shadow of an anonymous figure, whom he recognizes as a ghost before learning it is his father, at the top of the stairs leading to the attic. Presumably, he arrives at assumption that his grandmother's house is being haunted by this shadow after being told repeatedly by his classmates and cousins that at dusk, "pronto saldrán los fantasmas;" the ghosts come out at night and "la casa está llena de ellos (the house is full of them)."¹³⁶ While the shadow at the top of the staircase is presumably Farriol, Andreu's father, simply checking to see if it is safe for him to leave the attic, Andreu's perception of the shadow as a ghost, that of his father nonetheless, can be interpreted to mean the following: Villaronga is employing the shadow as a stand-in for the phantasmic presence of the prohibited memory of the Spanish Civil War, echoing Moreiras Menor. It peers out of the attic doorway, the framework for the *pacto de silencio*, and the film ultimately tests the waters to see if the shadow of memory can finally emerge in contemporary Spain. Poland's response to the interrogation of its complex wartime history has been a resounding "no," whereas Spain is toying with the idea of acknowledging its checkered past, but diverting attention to its role in World War II in an effort to avoid delving deeply into that conversation.

Lingering tensions between "rojos/Reds" and Rebels is palpable throughout the film in various capacities. Andreu's statement to the civil guards about the murdered bodies of his friend Culet, and Culet's father Dionís, leads the authorities to identify Farriol as a suspect, presumably because he is a distrusted "rojo/Red" and the mayor makes clear, "There are still a lot of reds to purge."¹³⁷ From this, the viewer can surmise that Rebel-controlled Spain still reads the presence of Republicans or "rojos" as a threat while the Republicans are still reeling from the sting of

¹³⁶ Ibid., (31:19).

¹³⁷ Ibid., (10:08).

imprisonment and summary executions, the victims of which ostensibly haunt the surrounding woods, the place in which the murders took place.

Andreu's stay at his grandmother's home in the country further prompts the viewers' confrontation with internal political distention as hidden family dynamics and histories come to the surface. Andreu's conversations with his cousin Núria's reveal the story behind Culet's last word before dying in front of Andreu: "Pitorliua" is a man said to haunt the caves of Baumes, where screams are often heard and where he hid "for political reasons"¹³⁸ that are still murky for the viewer. Andreu's newly acquired knowledge isolates him in his new school where the instructor, Sr. Madern, forcefully instructs the students to avoid "los vencidos (the defeated)" like you would "la peste (the plague)."¹³⁹ The character of Sr. Madern is quite literally the walking embodiment of what Preston describes as the propagandistic condition of education in pre and post-war Spain. He denotes, "By dint of totalitarian control of the education system and of all the means of public communication, press, radio and the publishing industry, the Franco regime made a powerfully sustained attempt to brainwash its population."¹⁴⁰ Sr. Madern echoes the sentiments of the guards in the police station as well as the mayor, making clear the political narrative instituted at the civil and governmental levels and affirming the dangers survivors faced in navigating the political and even geographic topography of post-war Spain; they were still hiding or fleeing from both. The distention amongst Spanish citizens is uncomfortably palpable throughout the film; essentially, "Francoism, like Stalinism and Nazism, can best be defined as a regime that was at war with its own society."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid., (15:56).

¹³⁹ Ibid., (19:10)

¹⁴⁰ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 520.

¹⁴¹ Graham, Helen, "The Memory of Murder: Mass Killing, Incarceration and the Making of Francoism," in *Guerra y Memoria En La España contemporánea (War and Memory in Contemporary Spain)*, eds. Alison Ribeiro de Menezes et al. (Madrid: Verbum, 2009) 30.

As a product of their social and political standing, Andreu's aunts endure harsh physical labor on the farm and at home to sustain the household, including washing blankets used by the ill and dying in the village. He accompanies his aunt Cío to deliver a fresh batch of blankets and she tells him the "cobijas infectadas (infected blankets)" "still smell of death," despite scrubbing them repeatedly.¹⁴²

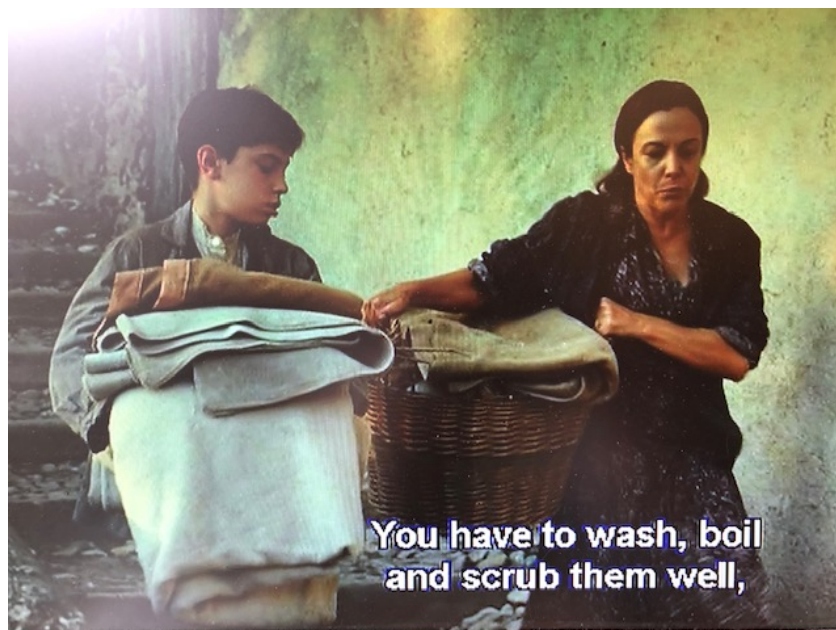


Fig. 6, Still from Villaronga, *Pa negre*, (27:51)

Villaronga employs the infected blankets as an analogy for the very fabric of Spain, still stinking of death in spite of Franco's efforts to forget or disremember the crimes of the war as well as the transition to democracy that made forgetting a mandatory prerequisite. The irony to be found in the symbolism of attempting to disinfect the blankets is that the need to sanitize Spain's post-war history derives precisely from its obsession with sanitization under Franco during the war, prompting Bradford Vivian's explanation for why the smell or legacy of death cannot be simply scrubbed from Spain's past by implementing a tradition of *desmemoria*. In *Public Forgetting*, he claims, "To forget, in this instance, is to amplify the power of death. Or better: forgetting as such

¹⁴² *Pa negre*, (27:53).

betokens a kind of death.”¹⁴³ The tradition of “la limpieza (cleansing)” and the process of forgetting that follows is a thread dating back to the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 under the direction of the Catholic Church, and carried through the Spanish Civil War. In her essay “The Memory of Murder: Mass Killing, Incarceration and the Making of Francoism,” Helen Graham elucidates,

In the days and weeks after the July coup, public declarations were made by local civilian elites in the rebel zone- whether bosses of the fascist Falange or people associated with the mass Catholic party, CEDA, or monarchist landowners or businessmen or clerics....Their message was that Spain needed to be purged or purified.¹⁴⁴

Subsequent sections will address the role of the Catholic Church in the Civil War, but what can be inferred from the institution of sanitized national post-war memory that supersedes individual and even collective memory is that the desire to cleanse Spain of political opponents of the Rebel project actually sullied the fabric of Spanish memory, still theoretically stained with the blood of “at least 150,000, a figure which includes the c. 30,000 who were ‘disappeared’ in the dirty wars of 1936-9. This is a baseline figure,”¹⁴⁵ but provides some context for the irony of all implications of “la limpieza” depicted in *Pa negre*.

Farriol’s decision to go into hiding is a lingering effect of “la limpieza” that plagued Spain during the war. He perfectly illustrates the fate of Republicans expelled by Franco during the war discussed by Brenneis in the previous section. He is trapped in political purgatory between Spain and France, hiding in his mother’s attic before Spanish officers eventually raid her home to arrest him; the war is over but “Red” bodies and memories are still under investigation, subject to incarceration, and prohibited from pervading public consciousness. Just as Andreu’s classmate predicts when he first arrives at his grandmother’s house, “You Reds will

¹⁴³ Vivian, Bradford, *Public Forgetting* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 20.

¹⁴⁴ Graham, “The Memory of Murder,” 33.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 39.

end up like Pitorliua hiding in a cave like monsters.”¹⁴⁶ Farriol is taken to a nearby prison while his case is “investigated” and is later sent to Barcelona where he is executed for a crime he may or may not have committed. Villaronga leaves the decision between guilt or innocence to the viewer, a tactic that makes the audience painfully aware of the difficulty of drawing the line between victim and perpetrator.

Florència and Andreu are permitted to visit with Farriol only through iron bars in the first prison, but Andreu says very little to his father. Florència weeps when she sees they have shaved Farriol’s head and the gashes he bears from the beatings; she pleads, “Está curado la herida? (Has your wound healed?)”¹⁴⁷ In this moment, Florència is not just asking her husband, a “Red” enemy of the state, but Villaronga seems to be asking those living in post-war contemporary Spain, through Florència voice, if the wounds of the war have healed. Spain, like Farriol, stands with its wounds open and unsutured, but still ignored in spite of being stained with red/“rojo” blood. Farriol replies to his wife, “Si,” the only reply permitted on Spanish citizens’ behalf in the wake of the war under the auspices of the *pacto de silencio* that would follow. “Si,” Spain’s/Farriol’s post-war wounds are healed and the country and people press on.

In the weeks before seeing his father in prison, Andreu visits his mother’s home over a weekend and rummages through some of her old photographs that she has kept hidden; he finds a photo of a young man wearing angel wings and the name “Marcel Saurí” written on the back.

¹⁴⁶ *Pa negre*, (20:35).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, (1:10:26).



Fig. 7, Still from Villaronga, *Pa negre*, (39:02)

On his next visit to his mother's house, Núria joins and takes him to the cemetery in Andreu's village and shows him a grave marked with a silver archangel with the name "Marcel Sauri Desca" etched into the plaque.



Fig. 8, Still from Villaronga, *Pa negre*, (59:54)

Standing in front of the grave of Pitorliua, Andreu learns of the tragedy Marcel suffered from Núria and Pauleta, Dionís' widow who is visiting her husband's grave when the two children

enter the cemetery. She recounts the story of Marcel's death as he was castrated and murdered by a group of men paid by Sra. Manubens, a wealthy woman in the village, to "haze" him when she learned that Marcel and her brother were lovers. Pauleta tells Andreu that while a group of men carried out the attack with the intent of only scaring Marcel by wrapping wire around his testicles, only two men actually carried out the castration, which resulted in his accidental death. Pauleta alludes to her husband and Farriol's guilt by saying one of the killers is also buried in the cemetery, but the other has not yet joined the dead. She also reveals that the fresh flowers left at the grave are from Florència. Andreu suspects his father of participating in the attack, so he and Núria run to the cave where the murder is rumored to have taken place to find "Pitorliua" carved into the stone wall and an "F" carved nearby.



Fig. 9, Still from Villaronga, *Pa negra*, (1:04:13)

Andreu is certain now that "F" stands for "Farriol," and he begins to reckon with his father's guilt he has now inherited through this discovery. That night, he dreams up a phantom scene reenacting the attack in vivid detail, dredging up a past his family has sealed off from him, even though his mother claims Marcel was a dear friend whom she felt sorry for because of the torture

he endured.¹⁴⁸

During Andreu's last visit to Farriol before his execution, Andreu enters the prison and must walk through a room where officers are disposing of two bodies that have just been tortured and killed before entering Farriol's cell where they are permitted to say goodbye. Villaronga confronts the viewer with images of tortured bodies being carted off carelessly, remnants of "...what historians in Spain now call Franco's 'prison universe' (*universo penitenciario*) which includes prisons, labour camps, reformatories and other state institutions that served a disciplinary function."¹⁴⁹ Andreu does not confront his father before his execution, likely because sees him as a broken and battered victim of the Spanish government, but also knows he is guilty of a heinous murder. Farriol is undoubtedly a victim of the Spanish government under Franco, hunted, imprisoned, and executed without sufficient evidence, only a "suspicion" on the grounds of being a "rojo" and therefore a conspirator. However, Farriol has his own checkered past in which he assumes the role of torturer in carrying out the brutal castration of Marcel or Pitorliua. There is no single thread of Spanish memory of the twentieth century, but many that comprise a blood-stained fabric that cannot be sanitized, a "cobija infectada" passed down to the next generation, the children of victims and murderers.

The dichotomy of innocence and guilt in Spain is bound up in the Catholic Church, a body claiming a monopoly on innocence while its limbs are tainted with various shades of complicity, which will be parsed out in the concluding section of this chapter. In terms of the Church's role in the Civil War, it was eager to ally itself with Franco, and predictably did not denounce the violence being committed within Spain's borders. The Church's treatment of and relationship with "rojos" is exemplified in *Pa negre* when Farriol is held in the prison in

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., (1:05:53).

¹⁴⁹ Graham, "The Memory of Murder," 29.

Barcelona. When Florència and Andreu visit for the last time, she asks if Farriol would like to see a priest before his execution, to which he responds, “No... todos son traidores y chupasangres (No... they are all traitors and leeches).”¹⁵⁰ When Farriol is executed by the state shortly after, Florència and Andreu attempt to hold a very modest service in a church in their village, where they are told there was no time to make cards for Farriol’s funeral. The priests then tell Florència they cannot continue the service; they refuse to hold a proper funeral and burial for Farriol because he cursed priests all his life. Opposition to the Catholic Church essentially condemned one’s memory after death to an eternity of exile. Farriol’s body lays in an unfinished wooden casket and finds a burial place only after a man in the town allows Florència to bury the body on his property to avoid having to bury him in the ground “como un perro.”¹⁵¹ In the priests’ efforts to erase Farriol’s body and memory by denying him a burial place and a funeral service, the church takes up the mantle of *desmemoria* in its insistence on forgetting those who opposed the Spanish government. In this example, we find a similar irony addressed in the concept of “la limpieza,” in propagating religious doctrine that requires them to disavow opponents of Spanish Nationalism, the Catholic Church is choosing to “disremember” that

[F]orgetting is tantamount to a sin against humanity—a failure to accept the moral burden of testifying for those who cannot speak, of bearing witness to heinous crimes that must not go unanswered. Forgetting allows such monstrous crimes to exist in the absence of moral response and thereby compounds their destruction.¹⁵²

Punishment for crimes against the state committed by “rojos” and “sins against nature” referencing Marcel’s homosexuality was the eradication of body and memory with no consideration for the foundational concepts of Catholicism that deems forgetting as “a breach of

¹⁵⁰ *Pa negre*, (1:17:54).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, (1:23:00).

¹⁵² Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 32.

the divine covenant—the ultimate offense against God.”¹⁵³ Church and State in Spain have been indelibly connected in the push for “disremembering” at various stages of confrontation (or lack thereof) with the history of the Spanish Civil War, with both institutions enforcing similar versions of a *pacto de silencio*.

Villaronga’s film addresses more than just the political turmoil that continued on after the war as it is heavily invested in explorations of sexuality, more specifically sexual abuse and exploitation of women and homosexuality. The inappropriate and predatory nature of the sexual relationship between eleven year-old Núria, the daughter of “rojos,” and her middle-aged teacher Sr. Madern, a proud propagator of violent Rebel rhetoric in his classroom, is analogous to both the female experience of the Spanish Civil War as objects of conquest/victims of rape, and Spain itself being conquered by the brutality of fascism under Franco and further bound and gagged after the war, unable to recount the experiences of theoretical and literal rape. In Núria’s circumstance,

[I]t is also important to recognize that the rape/brutal sexual assault of women prisoners was consciously perpetrated in post-war Spain—in police stations and interrogation centres prior to incarceration. In individual terms, rape is a form of psychological warfare through humiliation, but in macro terms it is also about what the woman’s body means within the national ideology/culture of the male policeman doing the raping: the body of a woman represents the whole community from which the woman comes, so raping signifies victory over the whole community—in this case the Republican nation.¹⁵⁴

Núria herself is a curious case. She is a direct victim of the war, which Andreu’s family reveals when they describe how her hand was blown off when she accidentally happened upon a bomb. She is also a direct victim of post-war violence and repression, as is evidenced by her “consensual” but completely inexcusable encounters with Sr. Madern who offers her money in exchange for sexual favors. Finally, she is an inheritor of her family’s political and social trauma

¹⁵³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 45-6.

(her father's murder during the war and her mother abandoning her for another man, leaving her to fend for herself), which ultimately raises the question of the role of *postmemory*, a theory utilized in both *Pa negre* and *Pokłosie*, addressed in the following section.

Postmemory, Multidirectional Memory, and Forgetting in the Catholic Church

Pa negre resists the tradition of *desmemoria* by focusing on the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and relying heavily on Marianne Hirsch's concept of *postmemory*, a theory centered around intergenerational trauma transmission, to reinvigorate the memory of the war amongst a contemporary Spanish population silenced by the strictures of a post-war version of democracy. The fragments of memory Andreu finds in photographs and dream-like reenactments of Marcel's murder demonstrate that "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—an experience they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up."¹⁵⁵ Andreu inherits both his family's identity as "rojos" that is ultimately tied to silence and/or expulsion in post-war Spain as well as the personal culpability of his father who knowingly participated in a hazing-turned-murder. The viewer watches as Andreu navigates through a past he has been born into by virtue of his bloodline rather than what he has experienced himself, being that "postmemory is *not an identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation."¹⁵⁶ The very performance of this exploration of memory and the discovery of his family's involvement in violent crimes during the war while still being victims of Rebel persecution attests to Hirsch's claim that "[M]emory is transmitted to be repeated and reenacted, not to be worked through," particularly in respect to the director's attempt to blur the line

¹⁵⁵ Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 331.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

between victim and perpetrator, which can be effectively addressed through the vehicle of *postmemory*.¹⁵⁷

One of the most important contributions to the reinstitution of memory in Spain in *Pa negre* is its use of Andreu as the keeper of memory, although not his own memories of the war, while his family and neighbors continue to conceal a shameful past. As an aside, it is unlikely that Farriol would encounter any judicial recourse in respect to Marcel's assault under the Franco regime, which largely opposed any lifestyle that challenged the tradition of Spanish heterosexual hyper-masculinity, another influence of the Catholic Church on social dynamics. However, Andreu unveils the truth about his father's complicity in the murder and must now assume responsibility for that memory. His response to this inheritance is essentially to disown his father's memory and his mother's presence; Andreu implicates his mother in Farriol's guilt because she knew of the attack on Marcel and helped conceal her husband's crimes. Andreu elects to be adopted by the Sra. Manubens and her husband, a wealthy and influential couple responsible for Farriol's arrest and execution, who have offered to pay for Andreu's studies in his pursuit of becoming a doctor. Moreover, he denounces his relationship to Florència at the end of the film by pretending his mother was "just a woman from his village coming to deliver a package" to him at school when his classmate inquires about her visit. In disavowing his paternal and maternal relationships and choosing to become part of another family, albeit one with their own murderous and manipulative past, he is attempting to cleanse his own "cobija infectada" carried from infancy and passed down from his parents, but also taking up another family fabric infected with both guilt and victimhood (as "rojos") as he assumes the identity of "Andrés Manubens." Andreu's pursuit of a new identity indicates his desire to distance himself from his

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 84.

family's legacy of guilt, but he simply joins another lineage of guilt imbricated in the Manubens genealogy. Both families occupy the dichotomous roles of victim and perpetrator. Farriol is victimized by the Falangist violence during the Civil War but enacts a similar violence on a gay young man; the Manubens called for the torture of Marcel as Sra. Manubens brother had a sexual relationship him, which brought shame on the family. Yet, the Manubens desperately wanted children and pay a large sum of money to finance Andreu's education as their adopted son. The guilty limb cannot be amputated from the innocent body, but must co-exist in the same living organism.

In much the same fashion as Poland, Spain has taken measures at the state level to regulate discussions of memory and essentially strip these conversations of allusions to or confrontations with Spain's "guilty limb" in the Civil War. The shifting of focus from Franco's crimes to the crimes of the Third Reich, particularly in contemporary literature, is one tactic that allows Spain to divert attention from the internal offenses committed under the banner of fascism to the larger European narrative of suffering under National Socialism. Brenneis calls into question recent "Spanish representations of Mauthausen" in the media that have been criticized for their emphasis on entertainment over accuracy, "though they have not elicited the same critical vitriol as Spanish texts on the Holocaust, such as Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Sefarad*. This novel, which by turns portrayed and fictionalized the experiences of a number of well-known Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, was criticized for dehistoricizing the Shoah."¹⁵⁸ Muñoz Molina's novel serves as a prime example of how contemporary Spanish literature can function as a pivot-point for diverting difficult conversations about the Civil War to more

¹⁵⁸ Brenneis, *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 35.

cosmopolitanized conversations about the Holocaust on the platform of European supranational memory.

Sefarad guides the reader through a series of encounters, with the voice of the narrator as a self-proclaimed “espía atento e indagador de tu memoria (attentive spy and researcher of [your memory],” continuously crafting avenues of intersection between memories of the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust absent of any real historical framework.¹⁵⁹ The novel employs particular uses of time and space, relying on the function of Bakhtin’s *chronotope* to carve out temporally transcendent “meeting spaces” where these memory fragments converge. One such juncture that punctuates various chapters of the novel is trains and train stations. Encounters on the trains themselves occur both in real time and in a sort of phantom time where specters such as Franz Kafka and Primo Levi repeatedly resurface as reference points marking these trains and stations as chronotopes. In the chapter entitled “Oh tú que lo sabías (Oh you, who knew so well),” Isaac Salama and a woman, both en route to Casablanca, converse and find several intimate points of connection on a train, though Sr. Salama is too insecure to reveal his dependence on crutches, a product of his physical and psychological deterioration for which his family’s heavy history is partially responsible, to pursue the woman. This train and the station of arrival are sites of intersection between two personal histories between two specified persons, specifically in a Spanish context, while at the same time juxtaposed at other points in the novel with interactions between another couple such as Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenska, in a completely different space and time. Muñoz Molina writes,

Cerbère, Cerbero: algunas veces las estaciones nocturnas parecen el ingreso en el reino del Hades, y sus nombres ya contienen como un principio de maleficio: Cerbère, donde los gendarmes franceses humillaban en el invierno de 1939 a los soldados de la República Española, los injuriaban y les daban empujones y culatazos; Port Bou, donde Walter Benjamin se quitó la vida en 1940; Gmünd, la estación fronteriza entre Checoslovaquia y

¹⁵⁹ Muñoz Molina, Antonio, *Sefarad* (Madrid: Cátedra Letras Hispánicas, 2013), 308.

Austria, donde alguna vez se encontraron Franz Kafka y Milena Jesenska, citas clandestinas, [Sometimes stations at night do resemble the entrance to Hades, and their names contain curses: Cerberé where in the winter of 1939 French gendarmes humiliated the soldiers of the Spanish Republic, insulted them, pushed and kicked them; Port Bou, where Walter Benjamin took his life in 1940; Gmund, the station on the border between Czechoslovakia and Austria where Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenska sometimes met secretly],

illustrating the crowding of history in placing Spain's own painful past on the same platform as the rest of war-torn Europe in the late 1930s.¹⁶⁰ ¹⁶¹ This series of histories in which Spain enmeshes its own begs the question posed by Michael Rothberg in his book *Multidirectional Memory*: "What happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere?"¹⁶² His solution is one that Muñoz Molina employs on a large scale: "Against the framework that understands collective memory as *competitive* memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross- referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private."¹⁶³ By calling upon the legacy of Spanish trauma rather ambiguously, the novel essentially draws attention away the Spanish Civil War, or as Paul Preston has deemed it, the "Spanish Holocaust," by means of forcing it into a public collision with the more widely acknowledged European trauma of the Holocaust.

Nearly each chapter in *Sefarad* narrates a different story oscillating between the desire to escape and return. For instance, the first chapter depicts a return to one's hometown after the war, the nostalgia for a childhood past, and the new unfamiliarity of what was once familiar, e.g. faces, smells, sounds. Conversely, later chapters tend to Isaac Salama's desire to free himself of his father's haunting memories of the war, his mother and sisters in a German camp, and the

¹⁶⁰ Muñoz Molina, *Sefarad*, 29.

¹⁶¹ English translations provided by Margaret Sayers Peden

¹⁶² Rothberg, Michael, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.

legacy of victimization that has embedded itself in the veins of his family tree. The narrator and “researcher of memory” illustrates, “Con el paso de los años, el luto de su padre en lugar de atenuarse se iba ensombreciendo de remordimiento, de rechazo huraño y ofendido de un mundo para el que los muergos no contaban, en el nadie, incluyendo muchos judíos, quería saber ni recordar. [As the years went by, instead of consoling his father, the mourning had pushed him deeper into the shadows of silent injury in a world where the dead didn’t count, where no one including many Jews, wanted to hear about or remember them.]”¹⁶⁴ Additionally, after his father’s death, Salama expresses the gnawing drive to abandon the history of victimhood he inherited from his family that has physically and psychologically disabled him throughout his life. He recounts to his dead father, “Tu vida anterior es un país del que me has contado muchas cosas, pero que nunca podré visitar. El pasado, las vidas anteriores, los lugares de donde te fuiste para no volver, las fotos de las vacaciones de verano. [Your previous life is a country that you’ve told me many things about but that I will never be able to visit: your past, your previous lives, the places you left behind, never to return, summer vacation photos.]”¹⁶⁵ At the same time that *Sefarad* utilizes the concept of multidirectional memory to conjoin the murky histories of the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War by explaining the overlap of memory, it attempts to engage with Marianne Hirsch’s notion of *postmemory*. Muñoz Molina, born in 1956, conveys undercurrents of anxiety that plague the children of Civil War survivors, but uses Holocaust survivors as the vehicle to do so. His writing stresses the “generation after’s” desire to shed the skin that still retains the stench of the suppressed memory of murder. While Rothberg and Hirsch’s theories in many ways ally themselves with and complement one another in the field of trauma and memory studies, *Sefarad* seems to insist that they cannot always function side by side

¹⁶⁴ Muñoz Molina, *Sefarad*, 330.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

successfully in the paradoxical and precarious debate over the resurrection and representation of the memory of the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War in Spain. By envisioning a platform upon which Spain's silenced Civil War-era memories are reenacted alongside the memory of the Holocaust, Muñoz Molina relies heavily on *multidirectional memory*. While he does communicate the plight of children of victims and/or survivors of the Spanish left caught at a crossroads of unearthing a prohibited national memory from the mass graves of history, he clouds the clarity of the conversation on the Civil War by creating an overlap of memory that renders the Holocaust and Spanish Civil War inseparable.

In examining the Spanish Civil War on the same plane as the Holocaust, employing multidirectional memory allows Spain to elude culpability. Herein lies the problem: how do political regimes that dictate social and culture movements imagine the nation into larger collective memory spaces of traumatic historical events outside their borders while simultaneously evading responsibility for crimes committed within their borders that are eerily similar? More specifically, how does a political regime imagine Spain, a country uninvaded by Germany, in relation to the Holocaust by ascribing to a wider European memory of violence in World War II, while glossing over its own blameworthiness for state violence enacted under Franco? Perhaps the most illustrative example of the complexity of Spain's relationship with Nazi Germany in the 1930s and Spain's treatment of its own citizens for the sake of furthering Franco's agenda is Guernica. Spain has been eager to participate in dialogues about supranational Holocaust memory in Europe while maintaining its stance outside the Axis of Evil in its refusal to send Spanish troops into Germany as the Allies became an increased threat. However, Spain's national narrative also now claims the stories of the victims of Guernica while ignoring the fact that Spain itself was the aggressor in this instance, and even employed military

support from Nazi Germany, who readily sent “men and *matériel*.”¹⁶⁶ Patterson explains “the categorical denial of responsibility by General Franco’s rebel forces,” and the crafted tale that Asturian miners had blown up the town, tactics used by Franco, and later a democratic Spain, to maintain a guiltless façade.¹⁶⁷ The aerial bombing by the “six-thousand-strong Condor Legion” on April 27, 1937 not only decimated Guernica, a lively and nonviolent market town, but allowed the German High Command “to try out new techniques and develop new strategies which it was able to put into practice when the Second World War broke out.”¹⁶⁸ Providing Germany with the opportunity for a dress rehearsal for the Luftwaffe calls into question Spain’s resolution under Franco to maintain its distance from the devastation of Nazi-occupied countries in World War II.

The issue at hand, put succinctly, is that if Spanish political and cultural climates render Spain, as a whole nation state, into a position of victim of a Nazi version of fascism under the umbrella of European Holocaust memory, Spain is able to evade the return to conversations about how the country itself unleashed similar acts of violence in the name of Franco’s version of fascism. The very fact that Spain is able to occupy the dual role of oppressed and oppressor, a phenomenon personified by Farriol in *Pa negre*, illustrates the Foucauldian theory that power flows in all directions at once, which allows for cases like Poland and Spain to be both victims and victimizers.¹⁶⁹ They must, however, recognize the duplicity of this position rather than steering conversations of memory on a global level only in the direction of a history of victimization.

¹⁶⁶ Patterson, *Guernica*, 11.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

Yet, this is not to say the application of *multidirectional memory* cannot or would not be productive when looking at the Spanish Civil War independently. The event itself did not happen in isolation, but it is imperative for facilitating productive investigations into this particular historical episode that parameters exist around Spain in the 1930s simply to distinguish it from the events that occurred in post-1939 Europe after the German invasion of Poland. This then allows for the implementation of multidirectional memory as it pertains to King's "move towards multiple perspectives" on Spain's internal war. Correspondingly, Brenneis embraces Andreas Huyssen's advocacy for

transnational memory, a 'memory without borders' or a 'productive remembering' (*Present Pasts*, 4,27), as a more generative approach to the past. He argues, moreover, that a 'transnational discourse of human rights...[or] the creation of objects, artworks, [and] memorials' (9) are more fruitful ways to unpack historical trauma. In Spain, where no truth commissions have ever addressed the scars of the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship and judicial efforts to adjudicate the past have been stymied, a transnational multidirectional memory that takes into account both the individual histories and their artistic representations seems to offer the most productive means of reconciling the country's past with its present and future.¹⁷⁰

Unlike *Sefarad*, *Pa negre*'s work is rooted in its implementation of *postmemory* in navigating challenging confrontations with post-war Spain about the crimes committed under Franco. Additionally, *Pa negre* lends itself to the possibility of a multidirectional approach of conducting scholarship and producing art about the Spanish Civil War by presenting one piece of the puzzle, one family's story from Catalonia, with the potential to be put into conversation with other regional inquiries into Spain's wartime history.

One connecting thread that strings together regional memory in this instance is the Catholic Church, an institution deeply instantiated in the history of Spain as a whole. The resistance to evaluating matters of guilt, complicity, and participation in crimes perpetrated under

¹⁷⁰ Brenneis, *Spaniards in Mauthausen*, 31.

Franco cannot be assessed without acknowledging the role of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Civil War and its legacy of anti-Semitism, which further calls into question the legitimacy of current discourses taking place in Spanish politics as well as contemporary literature and film, all of which have made gestures to place the Civil War on the same memory platform as the Holocaust. The European tradition of Jewish erasure has a strong foothold in Poland and Spain, both countries that weaponize(d) Catholicism to justify pogroms, expulsions, violent conversions, etc., and have done so for centuries. 1492 was a pivotal moment for Spain as it marked the “expulsion of the Iberian Jews from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragón.”¹⁷¹ Spanish Jews were given the “choice” to convert; those who would not convert were subject to expulsion by the monarchy and those who remained and converted saw the death of Spanish Jewish life. Eva Alexandra Uchmany claims that obligatory conversion “not only condemned the Jews to a cultural death, but meant erasing all their spiritual identity.”¹⁷² The eradication of Jewishness in Spain was predicated on the “*adversos Judaeos* tradition,” which wielded the Bible as a means to vilify the Jews as Christ-killers, murderers of children, and other invented indictments employed by the Catholic Church.¹⁷³

After five centuries of the absence of Jewish life in Spain, historians have demonstrated a renewed interest in the descendants of the Jews known as “Sephardim,” who were expelled in and after 1492.¹⁷⁴ The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* recently reported, “More than 525 years after expelling its Jews, Spain is officially recognizing Ladino as a Spanish tongue in the hope of saving the language of Spanish-Jewish exiles from extinction,” clarifying that “Ladino, also

¹⁷¹ Ojeda-Mata, Maite, “‘Spanish’ but ‘Jewish’: race and national identity in nineteenth and twentieth century Spain, Jewish Culture and History,” 16 no. 1 (2016): 64, DOI: 10.1080/1462169X.2015.1032013

¹⁷² Uchmany, Eva Alexandra, “Assimilation and Identity in Spain, Portugal, and the Colonies,” in *Sephardic identity: essays on a vanishing Jewish culture*, ed. George K. Zucker (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2005), 68.

¹⁷³ Jacobs, Janet Liebman, *Hidden heritage: the legacy of the Crypto-Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 23.

¹⁷⁴ Ojeda-Mata, “‘Spanish’ but ‘Jewish,’” 64.

known as Judeo-Spanish or Giudeo-Spagnola, is the language that was preserved by Spanish Jews following their expulsion from Spain in 1492.”¹⁷⁵ The revival of concern for an antiquated Jewish presence in Spain has contributed to Spain’s ability to insert itself into the collective European memory of the Holocaust by reinscribing a Jewish identity into Spain’s cultural fabric, which allows access to different avenues of European Jewish memory. Baer illustrates, “This change in social sensitivity toward memory and the emergence of new debates around the nature and significance of the traumatic past has led to a greater interest in the Holocaust.”¹⁷⁶ This presents a number of problems because it allows Spain to claim a Jewish past when it was precisely the absence of Jews in twentieth-century Spain that made it possible for Spain to evade a German invasion during World War II.

The legacy of anti-Semitism in Spain, predicated on Catholic doctrine, has been largely overlooked amidst the revival of Jewish memory. Additionally, deflecting attempts at dialogue about the Spanish Civil War to a Holocaust-centered conversation has also allowed the role of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Civil War to remain fairly untouched. The Polish and Spanish governments of the twentieth century saw newness and change as a direct challenge aimed at Catholicism and its foundational ideologies. Manuel Azaña, the leader of the Republican government in 1931, “made plenty of political enemies” in his attempt to “weaken the Catholic Church’s hold on the state by secularizing education and allowing civil marriage” as well as implementing tax increases on the rich.¹⁷⁷ Azaña’s proposed changes only fueled the vitriol on the Rebel right and strengthened its resolve to weaponize the Catholic Church. It is imperative to

¹⁷⁵ Aderet, Ofer, “Embracing Its Jewish Heritage, Spain Recognizes Ladino as a National Language,” in *Haaretz*, February, 22, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/embracing-its-jewish-heritage-spain-recognizes-ladino-1.5844585>

¹⁷⁶ Baer, “The Voices of Sepharad,” 128.

¹⁷⁷ Patterson, *Guernica*, 9.

note that “Catholic backing in terms of political support, military volunteers, financial assistance, and—perhaps above all—spiritual motivation and cultural legitimization became the most important single domestic pillar of the Spanish Nationalist movement.”¹⁷⁸ Moreover, summary executions could often be traced back to the church, as was noted in the Introduction.

Calderwood illustrates Franco’s position “as a champion of Spanish Catholicism. One of the most enduring ideological legacies of Franco’s fascist dictatorship (1939–1975) is what scholars now call National Catholicism (*nacionalcatolicismo*), a doctrine that espouses the political and spiritual alignment of the Spanish state with the Spanish Church.”¹⁷⁹ Regardless of region, to be Spanish, ultimately, meant to be Catholic.

The Catholic Church not only threads together regional experiences of the Spanish Civil War, but sutures together the legacies of guilt and forgetting in Poland and Spain. Both Villaronga and Pasikowski grapple with the Church’s version of curated national memory by depicting cemeteries as the site of reckoning in *Pa negre* and *Pokłosie*. Józek is sickened by the use of Jewish gravestones as paving for the town road, and literally assaults the physical structure of the church by removing the gravestones without permission, knowing the church would condemn both his attempt to salvage Jewish dignity after death and the vandalization of the town church. However, framing Józek’s recovery of the gravestones, desecrated by the Nazis and Catholic Poles, as defacement of public property brings to light a contemporary parallel in the Catholic Church: deflecting responsibility for the Church’s own abuse and defiling of young boys by priests and clergy. This pivoting of culpability regarding sexual abuse is germane because much like Poland’s circumvention of guilt regarding the Holocaust, the issue of abuse is

¹⁷⁸ Payne, Stanley G., *Spanish Catholicism: an historical overview* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 172.

¹⁷⁹ Calderwood, *Colonial Al-Andalus*, 143.

also reaching a fever-pitch and demanding recognition, if not rectification. In February 2019, Pope Francis held a conference in which he called for change, though this is far from the first time the Church has been embroiled in such crimes.¹⁸⁰ The Church's evasion of responsibility, not just for sexual abuses of minors but for the perpetration of violence against Jews and their memory, has spurred virulent attacks on Jewish graves and gravemarkers worldwide.¹⁸¹ In 2015, 250 Jewish headstones were toppled in Saverne, France; 37 gravestones and a Holocaust monument were graffitied with swastikas and anti-Semitic slurs in Strasbourg, France in December of 2018; 59 gravestones were defaced and marred with references to Hitler and other anti-Semitic vitriol in Fall River, Massachusetts in March of 2019, 73 gravestones were badly damaged in Husi, Romania in April of 2019, and the list goes on.¹⁸² Jewish cemeteries have been for centuries, and continue to be, a battleground for memory.¹⁸³ In a similar vein, the Catholic Church's favorable treatment of the bodies of murderers in certain contexts by way of exalted burials, e.g. Spain's *Valle de los Caídos*, lends credence to the fact that the denial of the same proper burial for victims, specifically Jewish victims in the case of defaced gravestones, is predicated on not just hypocrisy, but an archeology of silence. The makeshift/partial graves in which victims' bodies are sent to decompose are sound-proofed in the sense that they are tools of repression through burial, meant to stifle the stories of those concealed in them, and function as tombs for *crypto-memory*, which has begun to surface in the wake of mass excavations.

¹⁸⁰ Beck, Julie and Ashley Fetters, "Faced With an Ongoing Sexual-Abuse Crisis, What Are Catholic Parents to Do?" in *The Atlantic*, March 17, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/03/catholic-church-abuse-crisis-how-parents-are-grappling/584866/>

¹⁸¹ Nossiter, Adam, "Thousands Rally Against Anti-Semitism in France," in *The New York Times*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/19/world/europe/france-antisemitism-rallies-cemetery.html>

¹⁸² Paul, Deanna, "Dozens of Jewish graves vandalized with swastikas and anti-Semitic slurs," in *The Washington Post*, March 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/03/21/dozens-jewish-graves-vandalized-with-swastikas-anti-semitic-slurs/?utm_term=.6d257a1f400b

¹⁸³ McGrath, Stephen, "Anti-Semitism threatens Romania's fragile Jewish community," in *BBC News*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47865369?fbclid=IwAR2SKt2IH8Mzg05NDWdh41R1piJBeJOQhg5yN0PkMwDWSSyFWTJlPmYvjZU>

Sexual abuse at the hands of the Catholic Church is at the heart of Marcel's murder in *Pa negre*. Andreu visits Marcel's grave in the local cemetery with Núria where he is confronted by Pauleta. The confrontation is not necessarily with Pauleta, but with his family's history of murder that Andreu was not privy to. He recognizes his mother's attempt to acknowledge Marcel's suffering with the fresh flowers she leaves regularly on his grave, but he views her as an accomplice to the murder nonetheless. The fact that these moments of fracture take place in cemeteries and churchyards alludes to a rupture that these directors are invoking: a reckoning with a history of national violence must also be accompanied by a reckoning with the institutions that permitted and abetted it, in this case, the Catholic Church. The Manubens targeted Marcel and ordered the attack strictly because of his sexual orientation and that Sra. Manubens' brother was tangled in the scandal. Catholicism was written in to every part of Spanish life under Franco, and certainly dictated one's social interaction and sexual practices. Preston confirms that "‘Religion’ referred to the Catholic Church's monopoly of education and religious practice;" "religion" was used only in reference to Catholicism as Spain did not recognize religious practices outside of those bounds.¹⁸⁴ The Catholic Church, in Spain and globally, has staunchly condemned homosexuality writ large, despite its long history of priests sexually abusing young boys, which infuses the scene in the cemetery with a dark irony. It was essentially one of the foundational principles of Catholicism that was used to justify the deployment of violence against Marcel, yet he is buried in a Catholic cemetery with flowers brought to his grave every week by Florència. Andreu contends for the first time with the reality of his father's complicity in this murder only when he confronts Marcel's grave.

¹⁸⁴ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, xv.

Concluding Intersections with *Poklosie*

As was discussed in Chapter 1, *Poklosie*, too, grapples with the issue of inheriting a legacy of shame from one's parents, and thus perpetuating Hirsch's cycle of transgenerational trauma. Józek and Franek unearth the bones of the Jewish victims beneath the dirt of the family's old home and simultaneously the bloody memories of their parents' guilt suppressed by the town's ongoing legacy of anti-Semitism. This graphic scene closely reflects Andreu's confrontation with the site of Marcel's murder in "las cuevas Baumes," and later in the nightmare in which he replays the murder. Józek and Franek's parents' guilt is written into their ownership of the barn, the site of the murder, just as Farriol's guilt is carved into the wall of the cave with an unmistakable "F," a scarlet letter or "letra roja" of sorts. Again, we are confronted with the blurred lines of victimhood and complicity: Józek and Franek's parents were subject to German occupation during World War II, but carried out a horrific act of violence against the Jews in their town; similarly, Farriol was persecuted unjustly as a Republican during and after the war, but he was also a party to Marcel's murder, justified by the Catholic authority to punish what the Church considers "sins against nature."

Where *Pa negre* and *Poklosie* depart from one another in their discussion of who becomes "the shepherd of the dead" is in Núria's war-time disfigurement. While Józek and Franek do not bear any physical evidence of the burdensome wartime memory they carry, Núria is missing her hand. Towards the end of the film, she reveals to Andreu that she recovered the pieces of her "mano muerta (dead hand)" in a wooden box and uses it to cast curses. Józek shepherds Jewish memory by reappropriating the recovered gravestones to his farm where he erects them as proper headstones. Conversely, Núria must shepherd her own memory of her wounds with no one to acknowledge or bury the bones of her "mano muerta." The bodies that are

buried and recovered in both films are simply brutalized fragments, disassociated from the original corporeal make-up, and victims of targeted violence.

Post-war Polish film has begun to debate, although heatedly, the responsibility Poland has in burying and commemorating the dead. However, in Villaronga's film, the Spanish "rojos" must bury themselves; the victims are the silent shepherds of their own memories. Unlike memoirs of the Holocaust, autobiographical accounts of the Spanish Civil War have never truly been "en vogue." In the wake of the liberation of Auschwitz and other camps, survivors such as Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Tadeusz Borowski, and others began writing about their experiences in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buna-Monowitz. However, none of these memoirs were published immediately, in part because some survivors tucked the pages recounting their trauma away, unwilling to share their deepest scars with an audience until decades later. Some, however, attempted to publish their work in their native languages in the late 1940s and early 1950s and it was simply not well-received as American audiences were not ready to face the gruesome details of the Nazi extermination camps. It was only after the premier of the TV series *Holocaust* in the 1970s that these memoirs were translated into English and Holocaust Studies became an emerging field of study that gained popularity and awareness. The topic of the Holocaust became "trendy," which is inherently problematic but also opened up avenues to memorialize, commemorate, and start a living, breathing dialogue with the victims who were still living.

Survivor testimony from the Spanish Civil War has taken a different trajectory. With Franco still in power at the end of the war in 1939, there was no space or audience willing or able to receive survivor testimony from Republicans who had been brutalized by Franco and the Rebels. The *pacto de silencio* followed on the heels of Franco's death, leaving no room for testimony to surface. A great deal of biographical and historical novels emerging in Spain are

written by the “generation after,” the children and grandchildren of survivors, but these novels have yet to garner widespread international recognition as Holocaust memoirs have. Those who read Wiesel and Levi’s memoirs commit their trauma to memory, imitating Józef as a guardian of Jewish trauma. The fact that Spanish Civil War testimony has not yet caught such traction mirrors Núria’s experience. Spanish authors and historians must produce testimony and protect the memory and legacy of the victims, just as Núria must tend to her own wounds and the memory of her trauma, which Andreu rejects when she attempts to share it with him. Her experience continues to be relegated to the sphere of *desmemoria*.

The effects of the government-sanctioned process of *desmemoria* has “inflicted great long-term damage on Spanish society. To this day, its powerful residual effects hamper the ability of mainstream contemporary society to look upon its recent violent past in an open and honest way that could facilitate the necessary social and political closure.”¹⁸⁵ This willful renegotiation of Spain’s national history and the forceful “dispossession” of memory on behalf of the victims is beginning to lose traction amidst a generation that is in favor of both identifying a solution that allows the opening of archives and conversations to spur a progression towards a substantive and legitimate version of democracy while also shedding the layers of their own painful personal histories that have suffocated progress at the individual and collective levels. Contemporary Spanish literature and film is still careful, and in some ways timid, about the ways in which it challenges the victim’s right to a discourse on historical memory; although it cannot protest the revisionist version of history propagated for several decades as directly and loudly as some of its European counterparts, it is far from silent. The recovery of historical memory, a task taken up by the descendants of often the victims but occasionally the perpetrators, has

¹⁸⁵ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 520.

manifested most successfully in literature, and secondarily in film, as the number of novels challenging the hegemonic narrative of silence far outnumber the films released on the subject. In addition to Muñoz Molina's writings, novels such as Javier Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina* and *El impostor*; and Sergio del Molino's *Lo que a nadie le importa* all grapple with the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and World War II and the grey areas between accomplice and victim, history and memory, and reality and myth. However, a complete reconstruction of the scaffolding of Spanish national memory, built on a foundation of false national integrity, has not yet been achieved, largely because of Spain's ability to shift focus from its own history of internal war onto its recently recognized role surrounding the Holocaust.

The conversation around Spanish national trauma on a global stage is multi-pronged and the stages of confrontation with the past are anything but linear. King stresses, "The move toward multiple perspectives is also a feature of recent scholarship on the recovery of a historical memory within Spain.... Thus, for the Spanish scholar, there is no single way to remember the Civil War; instead different regions produce multiple memories of the conflict."¹⁸⁶ This multi-layered version of remembering, however, has not been isolated to the Civil War, but has recently come to encapsulate a claim to Spanish victimhood in World War II, though Spain was never invaded by German forces. Acknowledging the differences in regional memory of the Spanish Civil War is essential to producing a comprehensive archive of collective and national memory of that particular historical event, but the conflation of two historical ruptures that have begun to bleed into one another (Spain's Civil War ending in 1939 and World War II beginning with the invasion of Poland in September of that same year) is increasingly problematic.

¹⁸⁶ King, "The Criminal Past," 249.

Both *Pa negre* and *Pokłosie* force Spain and Poland, respectively, to confront their dichotomous roles as victims and accomplices in the massacres of humanity that befell Europe in the mid-twentieth century. The hurry with which both countries grasp at the position of victim and the reticence with which they acknowledge their complicity in both rogue and government-sanctioned state crimes against foreigners and neighbors comes violently into view in contemporary Spanish and Polish film. Carmen Moreno-Nuño argues that *Pa negre* takes “as its point of departure Holocaust studies’ notion that the memory of horror must not be lost,” but incorporates the Spanish (and Polish) dilemma of morality in war; she claims the “moral ambiguity of both characters and narrative structure reaffirm that there is no privileged moral position from which to judge the past.”¹⁸⁷ The structural overlap of cultural amnesia that continues to wash over both countries draws into sharp relief how two countries with vastly different experiences of the 1930s and 1940s have arrived at disconcertingly similar crossroads of wartime memory and oblivion.

¹⁸⁷ Moreno-Nuño, Carmen, “Pasts in Conflict: Stylized Realism and Its Discontents in Historical Memory Film,” in *Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain*, eds. Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink (New York: Routledge, 2017), 259.

CHAPTER 4: ELEGIES FROM THE GRAVEYARD: RESISTING BURIALS OF MEMORY IN THE POETRY OF CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ AND TADEUSZ RÓŻEWICZ

Negotiating Guilt and Declining the Dialectic¹⁸⁸

In her essay “The Exile Who Rejected Pathos,” Princeton Professor Emeritus Irena Grudzińska Gross recalls receiving a “well-used volume” of poetry entitled *Ocalenie (Rescue)* in which the poet, Czesław Miłosz, became “for [me] a war poet.”¹⁸⁹ Miłosz is a literary figure whose work lends itself to examination both inside and outside of the trauma of war. As a Catholic Pole and member of the *Armia Krajowa* (Polish Underground), he wrote from the crucible of Holocaust violence from a particular vantage point, specifically as a witness of the destruction following the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; as a writer challenging the Communist regime in post-war Poland and cultural attaché in New York, he wrote in exile in Paris and the U.S. for much of the 1950s; as a Nobel-laureate and professor of literature at Berkeley, he wrote from afar in post-war, post-Soviet-occupation space with the freedom to return to Kraków as a member of the Polish literary intelligentsia. Miłosz spent several years in the early 1940s in Warsaw, the site of the largest ghetto engineered by the Nazis in Poland, and his poetry written during this time reflects an intense preoccupation with observing the state of the physical body before stripping it of any worth or autonomy. *The New York Times* reported in their tribute to Miłosz after his death that “Terrence Des Pres, writing in *The Nation*, said of him: ‘In exile from a world which no longer exists, a witness to the Nazi devastation of Poland and the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, Miłosz deals in his poetry with the central issues of our time: the

¹⁸⁸ Excerpts from this section taken from Alexandra van Doren’s Master’s thesis completed at the University of Chicago in 2013 entitled, “‘The Shepherd of the Dead’: Disobeying Adorno’s Dictum in the Poetry of Tadeusz Różewicz.”

¹⁸⁹ Grudzińska Gross, Irena, “The Exile Who Rejected Pathos,” in *An Invisible Rope*, ed. Cynthia L. Haven (Athens: Ohio University Press), 118.

impact of history upon moral being, the search for ways to survive spiritual ruin in a ruined world.”¹⁹⁰ As such a witness, Miłosz was compelled to write from his uniquely precarious position as a poet (under the pseudonym “Jan Syruć”) and member of the Polish Resistance in a desperate attempt to shove the world out of its stagnant neutrality.¹⁹¹

Poles have consistently maintained a controversial, untainted image of victimhood in their own public consciousness and the issue of Polish guilt during the war remains entirely taboo in contemporary Polish discourse. Yet the difference between the victimization of the Polish body, marked by the trauma of witnessing which could implicate them in certain crimes themselves, versus the Jewish body which was the primary the target for extermination, is something that Miłosz examines in his poetry at the risk of being forced into exile. He challenges the hegemonic national narrative of victimization amongst Poles in his poem “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto (A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto),” which will be analyzed in the following section, with a contemplation of his own individual judgment day when his “broken body” will be delivered to his savior and he will be counted “among the helpers of death.”¹⁹² The ghetto witness is a concept Miłosz revisits in his attempts to grapple with what it means to watch an extermination from a place of danger and privilege.

One of his most recognized poems, “Campo di Fiori,” depicts a scene at the carnival just outside of the Warsaw Ghetto, in which willfully oblivious civilians indulge in a ride on a merry-go-round, meanwhile the world of Jewish life is burning on the other side of the wall.

Wspomniałem Campo di Fiori
W Warszawie przy karuzeli,
W pogodny wieczór wiosenny,

¹⁹⁰ Anderson, Raymond H., “Czesław Miłosz, Poet and Nobel Prize Winner Who Wrote of Modern Cruelties, Dies At 93,” in *The New York Times*, August 15, 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/15/books/czeslaw-milosz-poet-and-nobel-prize-winner-who-wrote-of-modern-cruelties-dies-at-93.html?mtrref=www.google.com&auth=login-smartlock>

¹⁹¹ Haven, “Chronology,” in *An Invisible Rope*, xv.

¹⁹² Miłosz, Czesław, “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto,” in *Poezje*, (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1981), 107

Przy dźwiękach skocznej muzyki,
Salwy za murem getta
Głuszyła skoczna melodia
I wzlatywały pary
Wysoko w pogodne niebo.¹⁹³

I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky.¹⁹⁴

The unnatural dichotomy of violent death behind and flourishing life outside of the ghetto walls is one that troubles Miłosz. The reader, too, must find a way to reconcile the way in which life persisted for those who were not immediately targeted for destruction under Nazi occupation. Does bearing witness to the site of Holocaust trauma from this privileged position equate to complicity? This question can be answered, in part, with an examination of Walter Benjamin's assertion that "[T]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."¹⁹⁵ Can an individual or a nation occupy the space of both victim and perpetrator? It stands to reason that this is entirely possible in a world in which civilization and barbarism exist simultaneously.

It would be remiss to evaluate Benjamin's prescription outside of the context of his ongoing philosophical conversations with Theodor Adorno,¹⁹⁶ who propagated and later revised

¹⁹³ Miłosz, Czesław, "Campo di Fiori," in *Poezje*, (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1981), 90-91.

¹⁹⁴ Miłosz, "Campo dei Fiori," in *Selected and Last Poems: 1931-2004* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011) 16.

¹⁹⁵ Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 256.

¹⁹⁶ Theodor Adorno was born on September 11, 1903 in Frankfurt, Germany. He studied at the University of Frankfurt where he wrote his dissertation on Kierkegaard before going on to become a professor and a member of a prominent intellectual group known as the Frankfurt School. After the seizure of the university's library by the Nazi Party in 1938, the Frankfurt School was closed down for "teachings against the state," and Adorno was brought to the U.S. to the Institute of Social Research at Columbia University by Max Horkheimer. Adorno's writings were heavily influenced by Marx and Hegel, making him an object of scrutiny for the FBI in their anti-Communist witch

a highly controversial dictum in his essay *Cultural Criticism and Society* in which he alleges, “Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today.”¹⁹⁷ Polish poetry of witness relentlessly rebels against Adorno’s dialectical theory. Alongside Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Różewicz, the “shepherd of the dead” discussed in Chapter 2, confronts Adorno unflinchingly in his poem “I did espy a marvelous monster,” in which he surmises his lifelong undertaking with a certain subtlety and modesty that is seemingly disproportionate to the gravity of the nature of his work.¹⁹⁸ He divulges,

at home
a task awaits me:
to create poetry after Auschwitz.¹⁹⁹

His recognition of the task at hand for a poet in a post-apocalyptic world is a direct response to the proposed dialectic; both Miłosz and Różewicz’s respective bodies of poetry refute the notion of a perpetual oscillation between eras of culture and barbarism in order to establish the existence of suffering as something inherent in the human condition, though manifesting in numerous forms and in varying degrees. This repudiation of Adorno’s axiom is predicated on Adorno’s failure to acknowledge three crucial demands of modernity: the preservation of

hunts. Adorno returned to Germany in 1949 and succeeded Horkheimer as the director the Institute upon his return to the Frankfurt School. He died of a heart attack on August 6, 1969 in Visp, Switzerland.

¹⁹⁷ Adorno, Theodor W., “Cultural Criticism and Society,” in *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 34.

¹⁹⁸ Tadeusz Różewicz was born into a modest family in the town of Radomsko, belonging to the district of Łódź, on October 9, 1921. In 1938, he was forced to abandon his studies due to financial hardships and in the early 1940’s, he and his older brother Janusz joined the Home Army, a group of partisans in the Polish Resistance. For the duration of the war, he wrote, edited, and published poetry and prose for the underground movement under the pseudonym: Satyr. In 1944, Janusz was murdered by the Gestapo and after the war’s end, Tadeusz moved to Kraków to study art history at Jagiellonian University, but never completed his degree. He married in 1949 and had two sons, Kamil and Jan. He was an incredibly prolific poet and playwright and was nominated to receive the Nobel Prize. He died in April of 2013 in Wrocław, Poland.

¹⁹⁹ Różewicz, Tadeusz, *They Came to See A Poet: Selected Poems*, trans. Adam Czerniawski (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004), 206.

individual memory, responsibility for mass murder outside of a solely political framework, and an acknowledgment of the reality that culture bred the very mechanics that enabled the operation of the *concentration camp universe*.²⁰⁰ The entire Nazi war machine was calibrated for the destruction of the individual, which leads us to the very site of trauma Polish poetry of witness seeks to unearth: the brutalized body of the victim. The body as the locus of Holocaust trauma and Poland's tactical avoidance of encounters with these sites of suffering have relegated wartime memory to the grave. The remainder of this chapter will interrogate the ways in which Miłosz and Różewicz ultimately account for the failures of the dialectical model and call upon Poland to redefine Polish poetry's willingness to come face-to-face with the traumatized body and dredge up the (crypto)memories Poland is trying desperately to suppress.

In light of many subsequent heated debates after the publication of his essay, particularly spurred by the poetry of Paul Celan, Adorno revised his protest of poetry after Auschwitz in *Negative Dialectics*, in which he rephrased his statement: "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poetry. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living."²⁰¹ This question is at the heart of Miłosz and Różewicz's poetic bodies of work. As demonstrated by Różewicz's poem "Ocalony (Survivor)," published almost immediately after the end of the war, and Miłosz's poem, "W Warszawie (In Warsaw)," their poetry seeks to offer an adequate response to the question:

Jakże mam mieszkać w tym kraju,
Gdzie noga potrąca o kości
Nie pogrzebane najbliższych?²⁰²

²⁰⁰ A phrase coined by French writer, political activist, and Buchenwald survivor David Rousset in his book *L'Univers Concentrationnaire*, in which he describes the conditions of the network of the Nazi camps.

²⁰¹ Adorno, Theodor W., *Negative Dialectics*. Translated by E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 362-63.

²⁰² Miłosz, Czesław, "W Warszawie," in *Poezje*, (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1981), 122-23.

How can I live in this country
Where the foot knocks against
The unburied bones of kin?”²⁰³

How can one live in an uncivilized world among “furgony porabanych ludzi (truckloads of chopped-up people),” where any semblance of humanity has been destroyed?²⁰⁴ With the inevitable emergence of survivor poetry, Adorno established parameters in which such poetry must operate in order to be successful. If poetic silence cannot, and will not, be observed in the subsequent years, poetry must adhere as closely as possible to an aesthetic of silence in its failure to articulate such reprehensible events. In his defiance of an aesthetic of silence, Miłosz begs the question loudly of proximity and how witnesses come to identify and make relationships with bones and the remains of “pogrzebane najbliższych,” or roughly “those closest to me.” The task of separating or parsing out the categories of witness, non-dead, and possible collaborator is nearly as unbearable but necessary as finding a place in which poetry after Auschwitz can exist. The title of this dissertation reflects the visceral sentiments of treading over bones that have not yet been properly buried and still linger beneath the feet of Polish and Spanish citizens as historians, artists, descendants of survivors, and politicians attempt to define a level of kinship with the dead. Verdery acknowledges the role of “[P]ursuing accountability and justice around dead bodies in these cases” as it “serves to reconfigure time by rewriting history.”²⁰⁵ It has become the task of those who feel Miłosz’s commitment to the memory of the dead to rewrite their history as human beings and not political sacrifices on the altar of totalitarianism.

Although he subjected his initial assertion to revision, Adorno’s hypothesis in all of its stages of development flagrantly shirks any responsibility for the memory of the victims on an

²⁰³ Miłosz, Czesław, “In Warsaw,” in *Selected and Last Poems: 1931-2004* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 40.

²⁰⁴ Różewicz, “Ocalony,” in *Niepokoj* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, 1980), 15.

²⁰⁵ Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 111.

individual level and, when viewed in light of Michael Rothberg's conclusion that barbarism "...results instead from an objective and objectifying social process that tends toward the liquidation of the individual," presents a number of problems.²⁰⁶ While Rothberg points to this particular site as the locale of barbarism, Adorno himself is guilty of perpetuating the dissolution of an individual existence. Adorno finds that the barbarism "of 'poetry after Auschwitz' is that, against its implicit intentions, it cannot produce knowledge of its own impossible social status."²⁰⁷ By seeking to file the Holocaust away as belonging to an elapsed era of barbarism, Adorno makes no attempt at recuperation on a human level. He postulates, "What appears to be the decline of culture is its coming to pure self-consciousness."²⁰⁸ Thus, at the onset of an era of culture after the end of World War II, the Holocaust must be viewed from a distance as an epoch of savagery belonging to a time already past. In demanding such a distance, Adorno abandons the memory of the individual in favor of the memory of an era of collective suffering. If the emergence of self-consciousness indicates the downward spiral of culture, then surely the poet must write from without, in turn neglecting the restoration and preservation of the identity of the victims.

Additionally, his theory makes no effort to assign responsibility for the massacre of millions outside of the social and political structures in power, which is where the questions of witnessing and guilt in the context of Poles in the Holocaust arise. By concentrating his argument on the political organizations that facilitated mass murder, Adorno fails to recognize the responsibility of the perpetrators themselves and those that remained silent and allowed the construction of such barbarous ideological frameworks. He is chiefly concerned, and rightfully

²⁰⁶ Rothberg, Michael. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 36.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁸ Adorno, *Prisms*, 24.

so, with the lack of a complete overhaul of the system in the wake of the Holocaust in order to eliminate the conditions that permitted such an atrocity. This preoccupation with the lack of ethical guardrails in modern “civilized” societies similarly plagues sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who identifies with a related uneasiness, “The anxiety can hardly abate in view of the fact that none of the societal conditions that made Auschwitz possible has truly disappeared, and no effective measures have been undertaken to prevent such possibilities and principles from generating Auschwitz-like catastrophes.”²⁰⁹ While this is a legitimate cause for concern, it disregards the agonizing fact that although the laws promoting the destruction of European Jewry were issued from the government of the National Socialist Party, the orders were transcribed and ultimately executed by *men*. In locating his central critique of modern society almost exclusively on political grounds, Adorno creates a sort of blanket amnesty for the individuals directly responsible for the day-to-day operations of the factories of death in the East. He, therefore, eliminates the chain of action and consequence and propagates the dangerous diffuseness of responsibility for human life.

Of equal importance is the dialectical model’s propensity to discount the evidence that without the concurrent existence of modern culture and Nazism, the Holocaust would not have been possible. It is imperative to distinguish that the brutality of totalitarianism was not a grand invention spun on the loom of modernity, but culminated on such a massive scale because of modernity’s lack of responsibility to decline cooperation and collaboration with the Nazi Party. This much is clear in Bauman’s “...message that the Holocaust was a failure, not a product, of modernity.”²¹⁰ However, it was the advanced modern bureaucratic system established by Germany, the pinnacle of European culture at the time, that was undeniably a product of a

²⁰⁹ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 11.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

civilized educated society. Bauman posits, “Dehumanization is inextricably related to the most essential rationalizing tendency of modern bureaucracy.”²¹¹ Adorno essentially fails to identify barbarism not as an absence of culture, but as a gross manipulation of modern society’s ordinariness requiring only the removal of the safeguards often imposed but rarely enforced under curious political conditions.

By shifting analytic lenses in approaching Adorno’s anti-poetry maxim, Rothberg re-evaluates the reference to Auschwitz in light of Mikhail Bakhtin’s definition of “chronotope.” Rothberg assigns this term to the phrase “after Auschwitz” in order to reveal its occupation of both spatial and temporal axes that are intertwined. Rothberg illustrates that Adorno’s “account of culture ‘after Auschwitz’ both constructs a complex philosophical chronotope and provides an original analysis of the effects of genocide on the space and time of representation.”²¹² In identifying it as a “time-place,” much like the trains and train stations in *Sefarad*, rather than a geographical location, Auschwitz becomes an embodiment of a set of events and effects operating within an historical process that marks the limit of an era by locating a particular crisis. According to this theory, it is within the bounds of the identified crisis that one is able to detect the locus of barbarism, acting as the hinge on which Adorno fixes his dialectic. There is, however, an inherent flaw in Adorno’s reasoning of the conditions of barbarism and culture that cannot evade scrutiny. If poetry, once a marker of high culture and an indication of one’s sophisticated education, now belongs to an era of barbarism, then Auschwitz must surely now belong to an era of culture. Adorno ignores this short-circuit in his tenet and goes on to articulate the irrationality of the existence of poetry after such events in a site like Auschwitz as a result of

²¹¹ Ibid., 103.

²¹² Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 27.

poetry's inability to "...produce knowledge of its own impossible social status."²¹³ Adorno uses this concept as a means of justification for his insistence on the impossibility of poetry's existence not because we have too recently emerged from an unparalleled series of traumatic events, but because we still belong to a world in which mass murder is permitted. Rothberg expounds, "If we always come *after* the event in Adorno's thought (both historically and epistemologically), we are always *too early* to grasp it."²¹⁴ To reiterate Bauman's claim, civilization has not restructured the political and social constructions that allowed for the existence of Auschwitz, therefore we are not yet outside the bounds of an era targeting the liquidation of the individual. It is only through the dialectical shift from barbarism to culture that poetry can hope to shed its damaged lens in order to establish an acceptable foundation on which to view these events.

Różewicz concedes that we are still within the framework that provided the foundation for the construction of Auschwitz, but rejects the notion that a poet must situate himself outside the bounds of barbarism in order to reconstitute and redefine post-war poetry. He finds no such end to Adorno's proposed era of inhumanity, but rather contends that suffering is embedded in the skeleton of civilization and is not a phenomenon unique to Auschwitz. In "Regression in die Ursuppe (regression into the primordial soup)," he professes,

zapomniałem że była
historia Cezar Hitler Mata Hari
Stalin kapitalizm komunizm
Einstein Picasso Alka-pone
alka-seltzer i alka-ida

w ciągu 80 lat
zauważyłem że 'wszystko'
zamienia się w dziwną zupę²¹⁵

²¹³ Ibid., 36.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 55.

²¹⁵ Różewicz, Tadeusz. "Regression in die Ursuppe,"

I forgot there was
history Caesar Hitler Mata Hari
Stalin capitalism communism
Einstein Picasso Al Capone
Alka-Seltzer Al Qaeda

in my eighty years
I have noticed that 'everything'
turns into a strange soup²¹⁶

Różewicz maintains that culture and savagery subsist simultaneously in a fluid historical process, culminating in the state of a “*dzwina zupa* (strange soup)” in which the ingredients are codependent and cannot exist autonomously. History does not persist in a state of civility ruptured by eras of barbarism, but is dependent upon the relationship between the two, the contract between Picasso and Al Qaeda. Similarly, Miłosz rejects the notion of finite historical chapters of culture and barbarism that conclude and move on to the next. He goes so far as to define twentieth-century Polish poetry as the harbinger of the remnants of humanity scattered amongst the ruins of barbarism. In a series of short essays in *The Witness of Poetry*, Miłosz asserts,

An important difference between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries probably derives from the crossing of a certain threshold: things too atrocious to think of did not seem possible. But beginning in 1914, they proved to be more and more possible. A discovery has been made, that ‘civilizations are mortal.’ Thus there is nothing to protect Western civilization from plunging into chaos and barbarity. The state of savagery, which seemed to belong to the remote past, returned as the tribal rituals of totalitarian states....Europeans had for a long time been effectively hiding certain horrors in their colonial backyard, until they were visited by them with a vengeance.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Różewicz, Tadeusz. “regression into the primordial soup,” in *Sobbing Superpower*, trans. Joanna Trzeciak (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 251.

²¹⁷ Miłosz, Czesław, “The Lesson of Biology,” in *The Witness of Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 51.

Essentially, civilization does not imply the existence of ethical guardrails that prevent society from diving into atrocities that were, up to that point, unimaginable. There is no identifiable barrier dividing culture and barbarism; they simply coexist with one at the forefront and one hiding in the “colonial backyard.”

The recurrent circumstance of suffering and the absence of uniqueness in that experience, though propelled by a particularly unique political construct, manifests itself in the writings of many post-war philosophers and theorists. One such philosopher, Hannah Arendt, attests, “Suffering, of which there has been always too much on earth” is an ever-present phenomenon, standing in defiance of Adorno’s criteria for the existence of poetry post-Auschwitz.²¹⁸ Adorno maintains that the era of barbarism has not yet come to an end, therefore we cannot begin to articulate the effects of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis. Miłosz and Różewicz dismiss Adorno’s case in their preoccupation with the creation of poetry in the midst of the presence of barbarism, a trend that does not enter an exit with the ebb and flow of society, but exists perpetually in rather nebulous forms.

Both poets do not hesitate to acknowledge the controversy surrounding the ethics of representation and the insufficiency of language after the Holocaust within their poetry, but they unabashedly defy the imperative to be silent. Rather, they subscribe to literary scholar Peter Szondi’s revision of Adorno’s axiom framed by Pierre Joris, “‘After Auschwitz no poem is any longer possible except on the basis of Auschwitz.’”²¹⁹ Essentially, poetry must always operate with an awareness and knowledge of the existence of Auschwitz. The writings of both literary figures embrace the persistence of poetry and offer a rebuttal to Adorno’s theory, specifically in

²¹⁸ Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 458.

²¹⁹ Joris, Pierre, “Polysemy without Mask,” Introduction to *Paul Celan: Selections*, by Paul Celan, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 29.

Różewicz's essay "Preparation for a Poetry Reading." He declares, "It turns out you can't destroy poetry. It is reborn in the most misshapen forms. It grins from the very pit of prose."²²⁰ His marriage of prose and poetry punctuated by his sharp minimalism leaves his audience with language stripped to its bare bones, the remains of humanity after the Holocaust. Miłosz, too, grapples with the insufficiency of language after Auschwitz and the need for redefinition of language in Polish poetry. He rightly claims that "language was appropriated by the people in power who monopolized the mass media and were able to change the meaning of words to suit themselves."²²¹ In response, he seems to suggest rather boldly that the language of Holocaust memory should principally be Polish. He advises, "Probably in no language other than Polish are there so many terrifying poems, documents of the Holocaust; with few exceptions, these are poems that survived and whose authors did not."²²² What else can be inferred but the responsibility of Polish literature, predominantly poetry, to the memory of the dead? Through the lens of Miłosz and Różewicz's poetry, we continue to ask how individual memory can be preserved immediately after the war through present day? It is upon this platform that post-war Polish poetry begins to construct a site of moral instruction, a task deemed impossible by Adorno, on the foundation of poetry.

Defining the Body as the Site of Trauma: Corporeal Destruction in "Ocalony (Survivor)" and "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto (A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto)"

Operating outside the bounds of Adorno's dictum, it is evident that evil does not appear in eras of barbarism, but takes shape within the confines of a "civilized" world, affirming the coexistence of culture and cruelty. This is precisely why it is imperative to interrogate the

²²⁰ Różewicz, Tadeusz, "Preparation for a Poetry Reading," in *Polish Writers on Writing*, ed. Adam Zagajewski (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2007), 175.

²²¹ Miłosz, "Ruins and Poetry," in *The Witness of Poetry*, 90.

²²² Ibid., 83-84.

position of witness and Poland's unique position as both victim and perpetrator. Holocaust historian and theologian Richard Rubenstein offers a congruent declaration, "Civilization means slavery, wars, exploitation, and death camps. It also means medical hygiene, elevated religious ideas, beautiful art, and exquisite music. It is an error to imagine that civilization and savage cruelty are antithesis."²²³ The presence of culture does not signify the absence of suffering, but in fact suggests precisely the opposite. As Różewicz and Arendt both concur, suffering itself is not exclusive to the implementation of concentration and death camps in Eastern Europe, although it becomes necessary to acknowledge the unique circumstances surrounding the ways in which such atrocities were executed. This singularity is confirmed by the fact that Auschwitz was not the product of an era in which savagery and butchery were commonplace, but emerged as a manifestation of barbarism that sought to alter humanity on a biological level. As a preface to Różewicz's analysis of this biological revolution, Arendt postulates, "What totalitarian ideologies therefore aim at is not the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself."²²⁴ This transformation, for Różewicz, begins with the destruction of the physical body, which I identify as the site of trauma.

Różewicz raises the question of survival in relation to the responsibility of a poet and witness. In the case of "Ocalony," he establishes his position as witness and dissects the literal and metaphorical liquidation of the individual. The goal of the Nazis was not simply to implement expedient methods of mass murder, but to destroy the notion of the collective within the camps in order to target the individual for annihilation. In line with Różewicz's own theory

²²³ Rubenstein, Richard L., *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 91.

²²⁴ Arendt, *Origins*, 458.

on the destruction of man, Arendt further explicates, “The next decisive step in the preparation of living corpses is the murder of the moral person in man... They have corrupted all human solidarity... When no witnesses are left, there can be no testimony.”²²⁵ Różewicz acknowledges his solitary state in the opening lines,

Mam dwadzieścia cztery lata
ocalałem
prowadzony na rzeź.

I'm twenty-four
Led to slaughter
I survived.

The speaker is left completely isolated, an involuntary witness to the atrocities that devastated Poland, alone in his responsibility to carry the memory of the victims. “Ocalony” begins with a number as the speaker’s only reference of identity. Although his arm does not bear the brand of Auschwitz, his sense of self is defined solely by a number demonstrating the incompleteness of his life in the aftermath of the Holocaust. By the war’s end, Różewicz is left with the bleak reality that the only certainty that can be drawn from the wreckage of his existence in a post-apocalyptic world is that he is twenty-four years old. After barely having crossed the threshold into adulthood, he has been “prowadzony na rzeź (led to slaughter)” and somehow manages to survive. He has emerged from the ruins of a country ravaged by war, only to realize that his evasion of death is all he knows of himself; he is utterly left with nothing. He relies solely on his knowledge of his position in the present time while neglecting any sense of hope for both the future of himself and the poem. Nothing strays past the immediate, creating an atmosphere of suspension in this historical moment. In the first stanza, we are confronted with the unadorned assertion, “ocalałem (I survived),” which carries a bit more weight than his declaration of age in

²²⁵ Ibid., 451.

the first line of the poem. This concise line is all but fleeting as Różewicz gives us an intentionally limited physiological description; it is only his body that has endured and adhered itself to the notion of survival, the most basic aspect of the human condition. Drawing from Różewicz's experiences, it is clear that "[T]he aim of all these methods in any case, is to manipulate the human body—with its infinite possibilities of suffering—in such a way as to make it destroy the human person as inexorably as do certain mental diseases of organic origin."²²⁶ Throughout his articulation of corporeal destruction, Różewicz makes no mention of *living*, only *surviving*. This action becomes almost banal rather than heroic in the desolate recognition that the body persists although the mental state may not.

In beginning the third stanza with the claim that "Człowieka tak się zabija jak zwierzę (Man is killed just like an animal)," Różewicz explicitly references the methods of extermination carried out by means of dehumanization, primarily in, but also outside of, the camps. This, however, must be understood in the context of the bureaucratic society that facilitated these methods with such fervor and efficiency.

The immaculate record-keeping, management of slave labor, construction of railways, and prompt deportation schedules all contributed to expediting the processes that enabled these massacres on such an unprecedented scale. Thus, anyone who participated in these seemingly inconsequential actions acted as a "desk murderer" and implicated himself/herself in the murder of hundreds of thousands. According to Bauman, the institution of mass murder "...was clearly unthinkable without such bureaucracy."²²⁷ The Holocaust was not an irrational outflow of the not-yet-fully-eradicated residues of pre-modern barbarity."²²⁸ From the moment the train cars were

²²⁶ Arendt, *Origins*, 453.

²²⁷ Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

²²⁸ Bauman, *Modernity*, 17.

opened, the prisoners were driven from cattle cars, sorted, herded, shaved, branded, and completely reduced from human beings to vermin targeted for extermination. Likewise, Bauman refers to Henry Feingold's contention, "[Auschwitz] was also a mundane extension of the modern factory system. Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end-product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager's production charts."²²⁹ In conjunction with Feingold, Różewicz refers to the Nazi tactics of bestial degradation beginning with stripping the victims of valuables, family, and dignity.

The victims are hunted like game and reduced to fragmented corpses that no longer resemble anything remotely human. These men whose bodies have been irreparably brutalized "którzy nie zostaną zbawieni (will never be saved)," a concept that directly counters Różewicz's notion of survival in the first stanza. It is at this point in the poem that he evaluates the contrasting meanings of one who survives and one who is saved. If survival indicates the endurance of the physical body, salvation must imply the perpetuation of the soul, which is impossible amidst such brutality. In this separation of soul and body, the endurance of the soul does not exist and the body is left as a vacant shell, the equivalent of the empty synonyms he goes on to list. The body itself has been evacuated of its soul, left to its fate of being chopped up and disposed of by the truckload. The soul is fated not to be saved in the spiritual sense and is left in a state of suspension where there is ultimately nothing left to be saved at all. Although Różewicz escaped the fate of his brother and those mentioned in this poem, his soul has not been saved, thus leaving his body as an empty vessel as worthless as the comparison of "światło od ciemności (dark and light)" in a world of perpetual night. One must take note that Różewicz's

²²⁹ Ibid., 8.

poetry is consistent in its impositions of and reflections on moral and ethical ideologies on the basis of a secular perspective.

Różewicz's instructions on morality within "Ocalony" rely heavily on the notion of the unsettlingly common nature of evil. Modernity has constructed the framework for the existence of Auschwitz with the trivial tools of the everyday experience. The unnerving ordinariness of Różewicz's Holocaust imagery is most apparent in a single line recalling the image of "truckloads of chopped-up people." This scene directly parallels his illustration in the section entitled "Shadows" in his poem "the professor's knife,"

freight trains and cattle trains
loaded with banal evil
started to move from east
west
south and north²³⁰

Różewicz's invocation of the images of trains and trucks become the chief example "...of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*."²³¹ His Holocaust imagery is blatantly ordinary; an everyday mode of transportation becomes the vehicle for mass murder.

Additionally, he employs the use of the fragmented body, which resurfaces in other poems such as "Warkoczyk (Pigtail)," reinforcing Bauman's allegation that "[D]ehumanization is inextricably related to the most essential, rationalizing tendency of modern bureaucracy."²³²

Różewicz likens the production of "furgony porąbanych ludzi (truckloads of chopped-up people)" to the processing of meat in a slaughterhouse for human consumption, rendering murder as something common, trivial, and perhaps more disturbing, rational. The victims have been effectively dehumanized and become merely a part of a bureaucratic process, placing them in the

²³⁰ Różewicz, "the professor's knife," in *Sobbing Superpower*, 219.

²³¹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 252.

²³² Bauman, *Modernity*, 103.

realm of complete ethical indifference. The effects of witnessing the disposal of mankind are clearly reflected in the tone of the poem's survivor; the impact of such events are not treated so casually, but the emptiness of the soul is more influential than the representation of the fractured bodies themselves. Dismembered corpses amount to nothing out of the ordinary. As Różewicz denotes in his lengthy poem "recycling," the scraps of the victims of the camps are dissected and processed in much the same way as inanimate raw material for use as soap, furniture, jewelry, etc. Even in death, the bodies are denied the rights of man and discarded in ditches or ovens as if they had never existed.

Miłosz's poem "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto (A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto)" reflects his fixation on both the fragmented body rendered visible in Różewicz's poetry as well and the gray areas of guilt between neutrality and complicity that pervaded his poetry throughout the remainder of his life. He begins each stanza with the following bodies: the body of the victim presumably, the body of the "guardian mole," and his own identifiably-Christian body. In the first stanza he writes,

*Pszczoły odbudowują czerwoną wątrobę,
Mrówki odbudowują czarną kość,*

Bees build around red liver
Ants build around black bone.

In the second,

*Pszczoły odbudowują plastry płuc,
Mrówki odbudowują białą kość,*

Bees build around the honeycomb of lungs
Ants build around white bone.

In the third,

*Powoli drążąc tunel posuwa się strażnik – kret
Z małą czerwoną latarką przypiętą na czole*

Dotyka ciał pogrzebanych, liczy, przedziera się dalej

Slowly, boring a tunnel, a guardian mole makes his way,
With a small red lamp fastened to his forehead.
He touches buried bodies, counts them, pushes on

In the fourth,

Boję się, tak się boję strażnika – kreta.
Jego powieka obrzmiała jak u patriarchy,

I am afraid, so afraid of the guardian mole.
He has swollen eyelids, like a Patriarch

And in the last,

Moje rozbite ciało wyda mnie jego spojrzeniu
I policzy mnie między pomocników śmierci
Nieobrzezanych.²³³

My broken body will deliver me to his sight
And he will count me among the helpers of death:
The uncircumcised.²³⁴

Each body painted in his poem suffers a particular kind of trauma from the invasion of ants, death, the act of witnessing, etc. Miłosz identifies the site of trauma as the murdered or wounded body of the victim and the “rozbite ciało (broken body)” of the witness. The body in the first stanza appears to be Jewish from the indication that the bone is black, presumably scorched by the fires incinerating the ghetto during the Uprising. The second body is perhaps his own or that of another Pole, bones still white and untarnished. The third body of the guardian mole is afflicted with swollen eyelids, a sign of the trauma of witness, but the fourth body, unmistakably his own, calls into question the spectrum of victimhood between non-Jewish Poles and Jews based on one’s genitals. In this poem in particular, his preoccupation with guilt and innocence and the vast expanse in between is denoted by trauma to the male body and their genitalia. More

²³³ Miłosz, “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto,” in *Selected and Last Poems*, 107.

²³⁴ Miłosz, Czesław, “A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto,” in *Selected and Last Poems*, 21.

specifically, he alludes to the issue of circumcision among Jews and non-circumcision among gentiles, which eventually marked the body as not-guilty or guilty, as Jewish men suspected of trying to pass for gentile were often asked to strip to have their genitals examined for circumcision, ultimately revealing their identity as Jews. Miłosz points to the penis as the identifying marker between victim and “pomocnicy śmierci (helper[s] of death)”; it is the male sexual organs that act as the signifier informing the Nazis that the Jewish body is one to be violated and discarded. Determinately, circumcision grants the permission for violence and invites trauma.

Miłosz's attention to the banal lists of materials in this poem is later echoed in Różewicz's contemplation on the "dziwna zupa (strange soup)" comprised of the trivial and earth-shattering elements of civilization and barbarity. Miłosz draws attention to the violence committed against these natural materials; he denotes a tearing and breaking of "szkła, drzewa, miedzi, niklu, srebra, pian (glass, wood, copper, nickel, silk, foam)." The aforementioned itemization of the bodies in each stanza is paralleled by the lists of raw and synthetic materials, suggesting that Miłosz is likening the destruction of the physical body to the tearing of "papier, kauczuk, płotno, skóra, len (paper, rubber, canvas, leather, linen)." The materials themselves become less manufactured and more corporeal and organic (e.g. celuloza/cellulose, włos/hair, węzowa łuska/snakeskin). Miłosz addresses destruction on a corporeal and topographical level; he takes great pains to show the relationship between “the miniature and the monumental, the micro and macro, individual and collective.”²³⁵ At the end of the first stanza, he describes a scene alluding to an explosion inside the ghetto,

Pyk! Fosforyczny ogień z żółtych ścian
Pochłania ludzkie i zwierzęce włosie.

²³⁵ Shallcross, Bożena, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 19.

Poof! Phosphorescent fire from yellow walls
Engulfs animal and human hair.

The description of incinerated hair refers to the collective experience of the victims, unidentified in name or number by their hair, indistinguishable as animal or human, and ready to dissolve into oblivion. At the end of the second stanza, Miłosz paints another scene of destruction:

Wali się w ogniu dach, ściana i żar ogarnia fundament.
Jest już tylko piaszczysta, zdeptana, z jednym drzewem bez liści
Ziemia.

The roof and the wall collapse in flame and heat seizes the foundations.
Now there is only the earth, sandy, trodden down,
With one leafless tree.

The reader is confronted with an unidentified building, a structure signifying the collective as it would have been a gathering place in whatever capacity it functioned, being swallowed by flames as it collapses, leaving us with a single standing tree, devoid of any sign of flourishing life. Again, we see the push and pull between “the miniature and the monumental.”

By introducing the guardian mole as the figure responsible for excavating the remains of the ghetto, the reader is drawn into an uncomfortably close proximity with the ashes. In the third stanza,

Dotyka ciał pogrzebanych, liczy, przedziera się dalej,
Różni ludzki popiół po tęczującym oparze,
Popiół każdego człowieka po innej barwie tęczy.

He touches buried bodies, counts them, pushes on,
He distinguishes human ashes by their luminous vapor,
The ashes of each man by a different part of the spectrum.

The bodies are depicted as “pogrzebany (buried),” but only assumedly by the rubble and ash rather than having had a proper Jewish burial. Additionally, the human ashes are distinguishable from the ash of animals or natural and synthetic materials only “po tęczującym oparze (by their

luminous vapor).” The ashes are just another item to add to the lists of raw goods we see throughout the poem. The evocation of an emotional or visceral response from the reader somewhat interferes with a clear understanding of how these “buried bodies” were destroyed on such an enormous scale. In her investigation of the Holocaust object, Bożena Shallcross asserts, “Nonetheless, proximity is delineated here *also* as a temporal, spatial, and emotional position, which requires separation; through separation proximity is better understood.”²³⁶ As is typical of his urgent writing style, Miłosz challenges the traditions of proximity between “object” and observer and implicates the reader in the poem by forcing him/her to reckon with the murder of the ghetto victims and answer to the guardian mole alongside the narrator, or Miłosz himself. The last stanza begs the question,

Cóż powiem mu, ja, Żyd Nowego Testamentu
Czekający od dwóch tysięcy lat na powrót Jezusa?
Moje rozbite ciało wyda mnie jego spojrzeniu
I policzy mnie między pomocników śmierci
Nieobrzezanych.

What will I tell him, I, a Jew of the New Testament,
Waiting two thousand years for the second coming of Jesus?
My broken body will deliver me to his sight
And he will count me among the helpers of death:
The uncircumcised.

By referring to himself as “Żyd Nowego Testamentu (a Jew of the New Testament),” and knowing from the poem’s title that it is a “poor Christian” looking at the ghetto, Miłosz demonstrates his awareness from the site of trauma that the relationship between guilt and faith is tenuous. By claiming to be a kind of Jew himself, he alludes to the fact that Polish gentiles often saw themselves as equal to Jews on the spectrum of targets of the Nazis, feeding the troubling narrative of martyrdom upon which Polish national history has been built. Miłosz’s

²³⁶ Ibid., 9.

body has been broken from witnessing the liquidation of the ghetto, but he sees no possibility of redemption in his anticipation of the coming of Jesus; he may see himself as a “Jew of the New Testament,” but his uncircumcision will reveal him to be Catholic, which he relegates, in this case, to the category of “helpers of death.” This is a peculiar reversal of the process of Nazi identification of Jews mentioned earlier. Miłosz writes this poem in 1943 along with “W Warszawie” in 1945, challenging the Polish historical narrative before the war had even concluded, prompting the government’s attempts to remove his voice as a witness of crimes committed by all walks of life in Poland in the years following the war.

Reclaiming Banished Figures: Exile and *Crypto-memory*

The movement of memory in Poland away from the site of trauma, the wounded or murdered body, in Polish poetry of witness towards the sanitized version of a national history depicted in *Pokłosie* is dependent upon the exiling, whether forced or voluntary, of prominent cultural figures and the memory of the murdered they sought to preserve. Many Polish writers fled from German-occupied Polish territories to Soviet-occupied Polish territories from 1939 to 1941 before Hitler’s breach of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, and some eventually left Poland altogether after the war. The Soviet takeover of Poland that followed on the heels of the end of World War II brought with it nearly the same level of censorship as Germany’s occupation had, only the content being censored was different. The restrictions placed on artists and writers put pressure on people like Miłosz to find an audience and a political climate conducive to producing poetry without restriction, where their writing would not be redacted or banned from publication. Shortly after the end of the war, Miłosz left Poland for the U.S. to take up his position as a cultural attaché in New York and then Washington D.C. in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His travels to and from Paris were halted when he was stripped of his passport on holiday in Warsaw

by the communist Polish government; with the help of some powerful friends, his passport was reinstated and he was able to return to Paris, but was not able to rejoin his wife and two sons in the U.S. due to his connections with communist Poland.²³⁷ For nearly a decade, he was forced to stay in Paris, where his family joined him after he won the Prix Littéraire Européen, and he produced critical works such as *Zniewolony umysł* (*The Captive Mind*), which explained the takeover and “side effects” of Stalinism in the Soviet Bloc and how the West perceives Stalinism. Miłosz continued to write and publish poetry as he had during the war, but this time from outside Poland rather than from the underground.

The soviet-controlled government of the People’s Republic of Poland censored his work and the need for his physical removal from Poland signified the country's attempt to excise any vocalization of memory that would require a confrontation with the traumatized Holocaust body; confronting the body directly does not allow any opportunity for plausible deniability of crimes for which there is physical evidence and the need for one to identify a perpetrator. There is no shortage of bodies in Miłosz’s poetry, and this was not a task the postwar Polish government was willing or able to take up. Additionally, Jews who survived were unwelcome in Poland after the culmination of the war for many of the same reasons: confronting the traumatized body that survived would require an introspective examination of Poland's role in the violence and a shedding of a long history of anti-Semitism to work towards rectification. Gabriel Finder illustrates,

Although the resumption of normal life for Jewish victims of the Holocaust was difficult everywhere, the difficulty was exacerbated in immediate post-war Poland by a variety of factors: Polish antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence, private and state-sanctioned

²³⁷ Haven, *An Invisible Rope*, xvi.

confiscation of Jewish property, and the desire by most Jews to steer clear of communism.²³⁸

As a poet who wrote about the extermination of Jews in particular and did not shy away from Polish indifference, Miłosz's exile was a product of the Polish government's insistence on limiting the scope of war-time memory that could be circulated.

For decades, the memory of the site of trauma no longer existed in public consciousness in Poland, the place in which the body was brutalized at the hands of the Nazis and sometimes Poles. It existed only on the periphery, in Paris, the U.S., or other countries that were willing to publish or acknowledge poetry written by the witnesses of the atrocities of the mid-twentieth century. The traumatized body physically remained in Poland, with bones and ash sometimes exposed and sometimes buried, but the poetic voice of memory was carried outside Poland's borders into exile. Holocaust survivor Simcha Minberg confirmed that the country “‘had become now in my mind a cemetery for Polish Jewry.’”²³⁹ The prying apart of the body and the ability to speak of the conditions that produced the trauma effectively creates a chasm into which memory slips. Polish poetry of witness written in exile carries the memory of the site of trauma, but cannot act as the shepherd of the physical body from without. Thus, this traumatic memory is relegated to a grave somewhere between the site of trauma and post-Soviet Poland's contemporary narrative of the war; it becomes, in effect, *crypto-memory*.

The crimes against memory resulting from hasty burials of victims muddled identification of perpetrators should resound with a not-so-distant event in Polish history. Guilt for the Katyn massacre in 1940, in which 22,000 Polish intelligentsia were murdered by Soviet

²³⁸ Finder, Gabriel N., “Final Chapter: Portraying the exhumation and reburial of Polish Jewish Holocaust victims in the pages of yizkor book” in *Human remains and identification: Mass violence, genocide, and the ‘forensic turn’* eds. Elisabeth Anstett and Jean-Marc Dreyfus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 35.

²³⁹ Ibid., 35.

forces, was attributed to the Nazis after German forces uncovered the bodies in 1943. Verdery elucidates,

Policies became heated over nameless dead from World War II. In Poland, momentous political changes pivoted on a dispute with the Soviet Union over who had in fact slaughtered the World War II Polish officers buried in Katyn forest and other mass graves. Gorbachev officially announced in 1990 that it was not the Nazis who had done the deed, as Soviet leaders had long insisted, but Soviet troops.²⁴⁰

The Katyn massacre stands as evidence for the validity of *crypto-memory*, as the bodies of the Polish victims were couched in a crude grave between the wartime histories, revised to different degrees, of Germany and the Soviet Union. The silence was broken only when the bodies were acknowledged by the government that assume responsibility for the perpetrators' actions, creating a space in which a discourse could emerge with films like Andrzej Wajda's *Katyn* in 2010.

The physical bodies of the victims of the Holocaust were left to decompose into nothingness beneath the feet of those that remained in Poland. There were, however, several efforts by individuals in the very sparse Jewish community in post-war Poland that took up the task of excavating, identifying, and reburying the bodies of the victims beginning with their family members. In an attempt to commemorate the victims from various towns and cities, "yizkor books (*yizker bikher* in Yiddish; *sifrei zikaron* in Hebrew)" became "the product of grass-roots efforts by surviving members of hundreds of destroyed Jewish communities."²⁴¹ The yizkor book of Żelechów, like the majority of other yizkor books, "recount attempts by returning survivors to recover and rebury the corpses of their relatives, friends, and neighbours, that is to say, they recount survivors' attempts to place *actual* gravestones on the site of their loved ones'

²⁴⁰ Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 20.

²⁴¹ Finder, "Final Chapter," 35.

and acquaintances' final resting place."²⁴² One such account is that of Shmuel Laksman, who "travelled to a neighbouring village to exhume the bodies of his three children, whom he then buried in the Jewish cemetery in Żelechów."²⁴³ In the throes of the memory war in contemporary Poland, which is still deeply instantiated in Catholic and Jewish tension, it is important to note that these recuperative efforts to identify victims by confronting their traumatized bodies or remains was a task taken up by Jews already in a compromising position in a post-war country still steeped in virulent anti-Semitism. Katherine Verdery draws into sharp relief the role of reburial in rewriting the stories of victims from whom their identities were stolen and discarded. She claims, "And so reburials revise the past by returning names to the nameless and perhaps endowing these revisions with feeling. Such outcomes are common to dead-body politics everywhere."²⁴⁴ The grave has always been and continues to be the site of reckoning with national memory. It is the very site where we move from the monumental to the miniature.

While museums or memorials have been erected at all six locations of the Nazi death camps in Poland as well as other significant sites (e.g. the last remaining segment of the Warsaw Ghetto wall), the bodies themselves have not been identified outside of the collective, in part because it is impossible to distinguish ash and unidentifiable remains on an individual level in the majority of cases, but also because Poland continues to resist any sort of confrontation with a site of trauma that may indicate Polish guilt. Jan Gross recalls that the "exhumation of the mass graves in Jedwabne, which should have taken many months to be carried out properly, was completed in five days in June 2001 with a removal of only top soil covering the site."²⁴⁵

²⁴² Ibid., 36.

²⁴³ Ibid., 37.

²⁴⁴ Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 115.

²⁴⁵ Gross, *Neighbors*, 122.

Poland's identification as a democratic country and member of the European Union is called into question by the current legal prescriptions quite literally outlawing the discussion of national memory in a way that conflicts with the hegemonic national narrative. Ironically, this has coincided with a reclamation of significant cultural figures, like Miłosz, after edging out from under Soviet rule. Miłosz became a great source of pride in the late twentieth century for Poland as a Nobel laureate, prompting them to welcome him back for conferences, readings, and eventually to lie in his tomb at the Church of St. Stanisław in Kraków as an honored literary figure. In 1981, he made his first visit to Poland since his exile to receive an honorary doctorate from Lublin Catholic University. The first Polish publication of his poetry sold 150,000 copies immediately after his visit, but in that same year, most of his work was banned yet again after martial law was declared in Poland.²⁴⁶ Miłosz's poetry marked the body as the site of trauma, but Poland's reclamation of his legacy as a *Polish* writer (whom they had once essentially forced into exile) and simultaneous rejection of his poetry avoids acknowledgement of the trauma Miłosz experienced and recorded. Essentially, the Polish nation state is trying to claim the grave marker, but not the body inside the grave, which is an empty rhetorical gesture. This paradigm is paralleled in Spain's exiling of "rojos," like Semprún, during the Spanish Civil War and the attempt at reclaiming the Spanish concentration camp experience that followed. The memory of the trauma then remains in the crypt as Poland continues to propagate the rhetorical acknowledgement that the body was traumatized strictly at the hands of the Nazis, while refusing any effort of corporeal recuperation that would require an acknowledgement of crimes committed not only by the Nazis, but by Polish citizens. Confronting the actual site of trauma forces recognition, a task Poland is reluctant to take up, and so we arrive at the impasse between

²⁴⁶ Haven, "Chronology," xix.

Franek, Józek, and their small town in *Pokłosie* where the excavation of the bodies reveals a shameful legacy with which Poland will not contend. Only in literature, poetry, and film do we see a willingness to revisit the site of trauma for the sake of repair. Miłosz, Różewicz, and Pasikowski beckon Poland to confront the traumatized bodies of the Holocaust, identify the perpetrator, and reconstitute the victims' memories by assuming responsibility when warranted. In Gross's conclusion of *Neighbors*, he reflects on the establishment of the Institute of National Memory in 2000, which announced plans to open an investigation of the Jedwabne massacre. At the time the book was published in 2001, Gross believed "that we have reached a threshold at which the new generation, raised in Poland with freedom of speech and political liberties, is ready to confront the unvarnished history of Polish-Jewish relations during the war."²⁴⁷ In light of the legislation passed in 2018 and the powerful right-wing wave that has crashed upon global shores, the fulfillment of this hope seems, for the moment, impossible.

²⁴⁷ Gross, *Neighbors*, 116.

CHAPTER 5: EXHUMATIONS, CONFRONTATIONS, AND SPANISH POETS OF THE GRAVE

Excavating *Graves of Silence*: Exhumations and the Mobilization of Dead Bodies

In the post-war years, the poetry of the *Generación de 1936* was confined to a space and time that had been relegated to the fringes of national memory, not outright denied, but collectively pushed out of Spain's consciousness from whence it is now struggling to emerge.²⁴⁸ Germany and Italy "had forced a measure of reckoning over the crimes committed by fascist regimes" following their defeat in World War II, but Spain, "which remained neutral during the war despite secret cooperation with the Axis powers," did not follow suit.²⁴⁹ The *pacto de silencio*²⁵⁰ enacted after Franco's death that held captive the voices of those who had witnessed the brutality of the Civil War has begun to lose traction in Spain, starting in 2000 with a social movement that "took root as archaeologists, journalists and ordinary citizens...sought to document and unearth mass graves across the country....With new tools like DNA sequencing and skeletal analysis, forensic specialists could identify remains and match them to living relatives."²⁵¹ One of the most contested sites of "commemoration" is the *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen), a Catholic basilica and memorial constructed on the outskirts of Madrid, where Franco is now buried along with mass graves containing the remains of both Rebels and

²⁴⁸ *Generación de 1936* was the name given to Spanish intellectuals (e.g. poets, authors, artists, etc.) working during the Spanish Civil War.

²⁴⁹ Palmer, Alex W., "The Battle over the Memory of the Spanish Civil War: How Spain chooses to memorialize Francisco Franco and the victims of his authoritarian regime is tearing the nation apart," in the *Smithsonian*, July 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/battle-memory-spanish-civil-war-180969338/>

²⁵⁰ I am intentionally resisting the tendency of various articles in this section to refer to this phenomenon as the Pact of *Forgetting* to emphasize the proper terminology of *silencio* because the former does not imply any sense of agency, whereas the latter implies a deliberate and conscious decision. "Forgetting" and "disremembering" are not one in the same; forgetting, in this context, signifies a passive process of allowing memory to slip away unrecorded while "disremembering" requires one to actively suppress memories rather than simply letting them fade into an opaque background. Silence, however, is performative; it is the action of *not* speaking. It requires restraint and premeditation to ensure there is no utterance of whatever is meant to be forgotten. It is a tool of "disremembering," placing a hand over the mouth of testimony and evidence to maintain a quiet and guiltless status quo.

²⁵¹ Palmer, "The Battle over the Memory of the Spanish Civil War."

Republicans. Franco announced his intention for the *Valle* to be a ‘national act of atonement’ to facilitate reconciliation, but this was hardly the case as he built the monument on the backs of Republican political prisoners and included only two designated and visible tombs: the first was Franco’s and the other was Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera’s, the founder of the Falange, “a far-right political party that helped propel the Rebels to power.”²⁵² To augment the size of the monument and enhance its gravitas, Franco requested that remains from mass graves across Spain be sent to the *Valle* irrespective of the political affiliation of the bodies. Before the *Valle*’s completion in 1959, 33,847 bodies had been transported to the gravesite, the majority of which were recognized as victims of Franco’s troops being that they remained unidentified, whereas Rebel bodies were given coffins and plaques identifying them as “martyrs” if their names were not available.²⁵³ In the decades following Franco’s burial in 1975, Spanish citizens and tourists alike have visited the basilica in droves, some to honor Spain’s history, including the legacy of Franco’s violence, and some to grieve the memory of unidentified corporeal remains that may or may not belong to family members whom they were inadvertently ordered to “disremember” after the war.

In 2004, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero attempted to tackle the issue of the *Valle* by considering all objections to and calls for its demolition. Many Spaniards argued that healing would only be possible when Franco’s enormous, doleful monument was turned to rubble, while others touted their pride in Spanish history, even defending Franco’s dictatorship as necessary. Zapatero appointed an Expert Commission for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen to try to conceptualize an alternative use of that space as a “memory center that dignifies

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

and rehabilitates the victims of the civil war and subsequent Franco regime.”²⁵⁴ This proposed solution was rejected outright, revealing a deep scar running down the body of Spain, dividing those who have no qualms with memorializing a fascist dictator responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 of his own people and those who feel insulted and even wounded by the very existence of the *Valle* and will not be satiated until it no longer stands.²⁵⁵

The arrival of a new Spanish prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, in June of 2018 has brought with it a drive to reevaluate, reexamine, and recontextualize historical memory. The exit of his predecessor, Mariano Rajoy, who was unseated in a vote of no-confidence, signifies a political and cultural shift in Spain towards an identity that does not shy away from taking up the task that Villaronga’s *Pa negra* summons. In a somewhat unexpected turn of events, Spain is now in the nascent stages of confronting the bodies of those targeted by Rebel troops under Sánchez’s leadership. Journalist Hannah Strange reveals that the project of examining Spain’s national wartime narrative was Zapatero’s brain-child, rejected by many Spanish citizens and later frozen by Rajoy; the project now

aims to grapple with a history Spain once tried to avoid....Now, in addition to exhuming Franco, the government also plans to open up the thousands of mass graves across Spain, which according to human-rights groups contain the remains of well over 100,000 people—more than in any other country apart from Cambodia. A truth commission is planned; criminal trials could follow.²⁵⁶

The possibility of judicial action was previously unthinkable, but the memory of the Civil War has refused to “die of old age” as Franquistas imagined and hoped it would, and the descendants of the generation of the war are growing restless in the silence.²⁵⁷ Spain’s course of action

²⁵⁴ Strange, Hannah, “The Politics of a Long-Dead Dictator Still Haunt Spain,” in *The Atlantic*, October 14, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/10/franco-exhumation-spain/572929/>

²⁵⁵ This estimate of Spain’s death toll during the Spanish Civil War contradicts previous estimates of roughly 100,000 victims and is taken from Fernando Ferrándiz and Paul Preston, who estimate Franco was responsible for 55,000 in the Republican rearguard and over 150,000 in the rearguard of the insurgent army.

²⁵⁶ Strange, “The Politics of a Long-Dead Dictator Still Haunt Spain.”

²⁵⁷ Palmer, “The Battle Over the Memory of the Spanish Civil War.”

following the excavation of Franco and thousands of other bodies is yet to be seen, but what warrants discussion in the interregnum is what the confrontation with physical bodies, or sites of trauma, means for Spain's national memory and how the recovery of bodies and identities will affect the way in which the war is (re)recorded.

In light of the massive push for excavations of mass graves in Spain, scholarship has only begun to emerge about the nature of the process of exhumation itself and what dredging up histories that were relegated to the crypt means for Spain not only in moving forward but also for the collapse of the dream of a *Transición* predicated on *desmemoria*. Francisco Ferrándiz's book chapter "Afterlives: A Social Autopsy of Mass Grave Exhumations in Spain" utilizes the term *subtierra*, which "refers to a kind of subterranean exodus, perhaps an extreme form of interior exile, which may share a historic origin with those who were exiled, banished, or forced to abandon Spain after the war," and is helpful in understanding the state and body politics of exhumations.²⁵⁸ What Ferrándiz and other scholars have noted about the appearance of and strategy behind mass graves is that they were intended almost exclusively for enemies of the state, Republicans, as part of an investment in terror. That is to say, the visibility of these mass graves was critical in assuring the nation would remain silent about the crimes of the Civil War for fear of sharing the same fate. Although the threat of summary executions no longer looms in Spain, "the contemporary reappearance in the national and international debate on the war, Francoism, and the repression shows that the wounds left in the social and political body were very deep and affected several generations."²⁵⁹ Agustí Villaronga's *Pa negre* was released nearly a decade after the first graves were opened, but also nearly a decade before the government

²⁵⁸ Ferrándiz, Francisco, "Afterlives: A Social Autopsy of Mass Grave Exhumations in Spain," in *Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain*, eds. Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink (New York: Routledge, 2017), 23.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

ordered such excavations rather than only the *ARMH* or other institutions dedicated to the preservation of historical memory. Ferrándiz's observations of the effects that the investment on terror and political propaganda in the name of *desmemoria* had on the "generation after" confirms Chapter 3's reading of *Pa negre* as a product of *postmemory*, a concept deeply resonant in contemporary Spain. Moreover, Ferrándiz's assertion that the resurfacing of skeletons marked by violence is a "fundamental starting point for a critical reinterpretation of the historical process of the past century in Spain" affirms this dissertation's theory that the revealing of traumatized bodies, in this case via a "subterranean exodus," creates an environment that allows only for "historical awareness of the war" and subverts denial.²⁶⁰ In fact, it is only because "the unearthed bodies that the graves contained have become *silent* (but extremely significant) *protagonists*," that it is now possible to pursue "the process of 'retrieving historical memory'" in twenty-first-century Spain; the traumatized bodies mourned by the war poets are the crucial pivot-point from silence and stagnation to forward movement and, quite possibly, progress.²⁶¹

In her book *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, Verdery lends further evidence to the aforementioned contention that coming face-to-face with the brutalized body of a victim of war under a dictatorship leaves no room for evading responsibility by highlighting the very materiality of bodies. She denotes that their existence as material objects means that "they are indisputably *there*, as our senses of sight, touch, and smell can confirm," and "can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places, bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present."²⁶² A corpse, whose presence is verified by the viewer's senses, evokes several predictable inquiries. The

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 27.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 31.

²⁶² Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 27.

predictable reaction to coming into contact with a body that has been subjected to violence is naturally to inquire what the cause of death was, which logically begs the question of who is responsible for the cause? Verdery's research supports this theory in its assertion

...that reburials narrow and bound the community of mourners, excluding persons no longer welcome in the national kin group of the new nation-state. These effects come not just from who participates in which reburials but also from controversies of *culpability* and *accountability*: Who is responsible for these deaths, and how should the guilty be brought to justice?²⁶³

A corpse's concreteness does not allow slippery and revised historical narratives to sidle past it with no attribution of responsibility. Verdery rightly raises the issue of how manipulating and transplanting dead bodies calls into question "the work of contesting national histories and repositioning temporal landmarks," which, "implies far more than merely 'restoring truth': it challenges the entire national genealogy."²⁶⁴ In the case of excavating mass graves, Spain must reassess the genealogy of its citizens, none of whom have been acknowledged as victim, perpetrator, or something in between, but all of whom have assumed blanket amnesty regardless of their actions during the war. This alone challenges the accepted hegemonic narrative that has been upheld for the last four decades. Verdery concludes,

Dead bodies have another great advantage as symbols: they don't talk much on their own (though they did once). Words can be put into their mouths—often quite ambiguous words—or their own actual words can be ambiguated by quoting them out of context. It is thus easier to rewrite history with dead people than with other kinds of symbols that are speechless.²⁶⁵

Her assessment of dead bodies and their political functions, however, does not account for voices like Miguel Hernández, Luis Pimentel, Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, and other poets of the graves that continued to speak for the dead after their remains were abandoned or locked in the vault of

²⁶³ Ibid., 111.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 41.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 29.

desmemoria, dumped namelessly in mass graves. Excavating and repurposing skeletons without context or transparency gives way for the effect Verdery describes, but the Republican victims of the Spanish Civil War were not without spokesmen. In fact, it was the poets that wrote from the trenches that made it possible to unleash a “plethora of first-hand and transmitted memories, which in turn unveiled the kinship and social relations of the dead and the powerful social life of these stories of repression in the present,” once these corpses had been exhumed.²⁶⁶ The traumatized bodies were not entirely bereft of words for decades, but their speechlessness was partly a product of the censorship of wartime poets who shepherded the memory of their dead with vigilance and grief. Germán Labrador Méndez claims,

They *style* shared by the poetry of the graves unfolds in the sphere of an ethics and a politics, a mode of looking and remembering and a means of relating to death. The continuities in the imaginary and poetic strategies of the poems of the graves stem from a possible relation that the imaginary community of *Republican survivors* maintains with the experience and the memory of the mass deaths of the Civil War and of repression, with its long-term consequences.²⁶⁷

The following section will examine two such poems and the way in which they treat the bodies of the victims of the Spanish Civil War and mourn from a pulpit, recording a history that would be banned for decades but that now does not allow for the continued rewriting of history with speechless corpses.

“Sentado sobre los muertos”: The Poetry of Ritual Mourners

The role of the poet in Spain, particularly for the war poet, has remained the same: that of the harbinger of resistance and a soothsayer of sorts. After all, the Spanish poet “had for centuries taken up his pen against wars and oppression, ever since Cervantes in *Numancia*

²⁶⁶ Aragüete-Toribio, Zahira, *Producing History in Spanish Civil War Exhumations: From the Archive to the Grave* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 248.

²⁶⁷ Labrador Méndez, Germán, “Poets of the Dead Society,” in *Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain*, eds. Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink (New York: Routledge, 2017), 235.

showed how the will of the people could be pitted against the legions of ancient Rome.”²⁶⁸ It is imperative to preface, however, that neither the Republicans nor the Rebels can claim ownership of poetry of resistance during or after the war, as it existed on both sides and advocated for different idealized versions of the motherland. This chapter is interested in the lamentations and elegies of the Republican victims of Franco-era violence, and will focus exclusively on leftist poetry, though it does not deny the role of poetry on the right. Spain’s legacy of internal unrest and turmoil resonated with poets for tens, if not hundreds, of years before the atrocities of the twentieth century; “Larra, the poet who died one century before the Spanish Civil War, predicted its outcome in the prophetic words: ‘here lies half of Spain, done to death by the other half.’”²⁶⁹ Much like Poland’s poets turned away from the romantic and lyrical poetic traditions of Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprian Norwid with the onset of World War II, Spain’s poets rejected the verse and grandeur of *Siglo de Oro* (Spanish Golden Age) poetry upon entering the theatre of war in 1936. Professor Robert J. Clements confesses,

It occurs to me that the Spanish War was probably the first one which liberated poetry entirely from traditional Western forms of verse. Elegy loses metre, sonnets burst their bonds, odes defy syllable-counts. The forms of lyric poetry are cast aside as though the poet had discovered that there is no longer anything lyrical about war. Rhyme is more and more rejected, as though the poet no longer found rhyme or reason in war.²⁷⁰

Miguel Hernández was only twenty six years old when Spain was catapulted into the Civil War after a coup staged by General Francisco Franco to overthrow the President of the Republic Manuel Azaña. Franco and the Rebels did not declare victory and assume power over a battered and bloodied Spain until 1939, but the years preceding his takeover were ripe with instances of “total war” (e.g. Guernica) that left the country utterly pulverized. Hernández had already

²⁶⁸ Clements, Robert J., Foreword to *Poetry of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University, 1975), xvi.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., xvi.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., xix.

achieved moderate success as a poet before the war, befriending Pablo Neruda and Vicente Aleixandre, as well as making his way into the circles of Alberti, García Lorca, and Altolaguirre, all poets whose works were heavily invested in the Spanish conflict.²⁷¹ While working in Madrid, Hernández enlisted in the Republican army and fought in the trenches until his incarceration in various jails and his eventual death in the prison of Alicante from typhoid fever and tuberculosis in 1942 at the age of thirty-one.²⁷²

Often attributed to his youth, Hernández's preoccupation with morality and patriotism as part of the *Generación de 1936* reverberates through nearly every stanza in every poem produced during the war, in which he ties the blood and bone of the victims to the land itself. He was in the unique position of bearing witness to "Spain, done to death by the other half" with the literary sensibilities to convey that trauma in his writings as both an established pre-war poet and soldier. Professor Marilyn Rosenthal asserts, "Hernández could identify totally with the Spanish soldiers, having been one. The close association of these poets to what they wrote showed itself also in [their] preference for first-person narration of [their] poems," which will be examined in the close readings of the poem that follows.²⁷³ A poet and member of the resistance in the *Armia Krajowa* himself, Czesław Miłosz's wartime experience parallels and differs in many ways from that of Hernández, which produces uncanny instances of mirroring in their poetry while still retaining their respective national identities. While it is often said that death is the great leveler, I argue that war, in this instance, levels disparities in social, economic, political, and linguistic conditions in literature, generating poetry of witness that ultimately gives open accessibility. In war, we are all ultimately sifting through the rubble in hopes of reconstructing terra firma.

²⁷¹ Rosenthal, Marilyn, *Poetry of the Spanish Civil War*, 40.

²⁷² Ibid., 41-42.

²⁷³ Ibid., 7.

Written in 1937, “Sentado sobre los muertos (Sitting upon the Dead)” employs the first person narrator with Hernández straddling the line between poet and soldier, giving a voice to the grief of a people massacred while emboldening those still living to “acabar con las fieras/que lo han sido tantas veces (finish with ferocity those/who have been so many times ferocious).”²⁷⁴ The narrator, presumably Hernández, begins “sentado sobre los muertos,” sitting upon ruins of a people and a country, where he kisses the victims’ “zapatos vacios (empty shoes),” an overarching signifier that gains particular significance in Poland in the following decade where mountains of corpses are matched only by mountains of hair and shoes in death camps. The theme of empty shoes has become a theme of commemoration, as depicted by the Shoes on the Danube memorial in Budapest (Image 1.1 in the Appendix). Hernández kisses the empty shoes

y empuño rabiosamente
la mano del corazón
y el alma que lo sostiene.

and make an angry fist
with the heart’s hand
and the soul that drives it.²⁷⁵

In the final lines of the first stanza, we see the first instance of the depiction of the physical body, but only in fragments, e.g. la mano del corazón, el alma. Różewicz’s “Ocalony (Survivor)” and Miłosz’s “W Warszawie (In Warsaw)” similarly speak of the body as chopped up or reduced to bone fragments, though Hernández is infused with much more spirit than those of his Polish counterparts. Hernández claims that the driving force behind the movement and action of the narrator’s fist and heart’s hand is the soul, a concept visited in “Ocalony,” as Różewicz’s

²⁷⁴ Hernández, Miguel, “Sentado sobre los muertos,” in *Viento del pueblo* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1937), 20-22.

²⁷⁵ Hernández, Miguel, *The Selected Poems of Miguel Hernández*, ed. Ted Genoways (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

survivor has emerged from the war with only the shell of his physical being, seemingly vacated of a soul.

The second stanza depicts a poet desperate to shake his people out of the depths of defeat with a painful war cry, using only his voice as a weapon. Hernández proclaims,

Que mi voz suba a los montes
y baje a la tierra y truene,
eso pide mi garganta
desde ahora y desde siempre.

That my voice climb the mountains
and descend to earth as thunder:
this what my throat begs
now and forever.

The disembodied voice and throat of the narrator indicate that the body is no longer functioning synchronously. Rather, individual parts are functioning autonomously. Each part is personified in its movements with a voice that climbs mountains and a throat that begs; it is decidedly the body parts and not the whole being of the narrator performing these actions. The final line of this stanza, “desde ahora y desde siempre,” imbues the poet’s voice with an immortal echo that resounds amongst his people. Hernández is fighting not only for the survival of his people and “political institutions, but of prose and poetry as well,” fulfilling Auden’s hope “that war would generate a land of great and prolific poetry: ‘Tomorrow for the young, the poets exploding like bombs.’”²⁷⁶

The narrator beckons the audience to “Acércate a mi clamor (Come close to my clamor)” in the third stanza, identifying his audience as “pueblo de mi misma leche (people fed from the same breast).” This form of address is specific to the Civil War experience. He is calling out to one people, divided and tearing each other in two, to return to the breast of the Spanish

²⁷⁶ Clements, Foreword, xviii.

motherland from which they were all born. Hernández utilizes the language of infancy as a leveling device, bringing Spaniards back to the womb where they are not divided by political or religious creed, but nourished by the same milk. He further calls upon the image of an “árbol que con tus raíces (tree and its roots),” an object that is unmovable, unshakeable, and bound to the earth, which is what he demands of his people. The fifth and sixth lines mark Hernández’s transition from poet to soldier as he reveals,

Que aquí estoy yo para amarte
y estoy para defenderte
con la sangre y con la boca
como dos fusiles fieles.

Because I am here to love you
and I am here to defend you
with my blood and with my mouth
like two faithful rifles.

His blood and mouth as a poet have become weapons, “dos fusiles fieles,” with which he defends Spain. The poet is here “para amarte” while the soldier is here “para defenderte.” His blood and body belong to Spain, to which he remains unshakably devoted as the tree with its roots that “encarcelado me tienes (keep [me] in prison).” Hernández exemplifies the *Generación de 1936* who “embraced rather the theme not of fighting, but of fighting back. As if aware of their millennial duty, the Spanish poets felt obliged to speak out with clarity.”²⁷⁷

The fourth stanza’s filial piety is palpable; again, we return the womb of the motherland as Hernández retraces his heritage back to the earth. He writes, “Si yo salí de la tierra,/si yo he nacido de un vientre/desdichado y con pobreza (If I came out of the earth/if I was born from a womb/pitiful and poor),” referring back to a state of infancy from which we all originated. If he was born from the dust and rubble and salt of the earth, it was only so that he would become

ruiseñor de las desdichas,

²⁷⁷ Ibid., xvi.

eco de la mala suerte,
y cantar y repitir
a quien escucharme debe
cuanto a penas, cuanto a pobres
cuanto a tierra se refiere.

The nightingale of the pitiful,
echo of bad luck,
to sing and to repeat
to those who must hear me
everything of pain, everything of poverty,
everything of earth.

It is in this stanza that the poet-soldier hybrid narrator assumes the title of “ruiseñor de las dedichas (nightingale of the pitiful),” a task given to him by virtue of being born from mother Spain in a time of war. In this stanza, there is an unmistakable correspondence between Hernández’s nightingale that echoes bad luck, singing and repeating a refrain of suffering, and Miłosz’s “ritual mourner.” In the third stanza of “W Warszawie,” Miłosz laments,

Przysięgałeś, że nigdy nie będziesz
Płaczką żalobną.
Przysięgałeś, że nigdy nie dotkniesz
Ran wielkich swego narodu,
Aby nie zmienić ich w świętość,
Przeklętą świętość, co ściga
Przez dalsze wieki potomnych.²⁷⁸

You swore never to be
A ritual mourner.
You swore never to touch
The deep wounds of your nation
So you would not make them holy
With the accursed holiness that pursues
Descendants for many centuries.²⁷⁹

Miłosz is much more than reticent or resistant to take up this task; he longs to outright reject the label of “ritual mourner,” ascribed to him not by his own choosing but because of his accursed

²⁷⁸ Miłosz, Czesław, “W Warszawie,” in *Poezje*, 122-23.

²⁷⁹ Miłosz, Czesław, “In Warsaw,” in *Selected and Last Poems*, 40.

position as witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust. He “swore never to be a ritual mourner,” yet a poet and a witness is left no other choice. They are, by nature, those best suited to the task. He confesses in the fifth stanza of “W Warszawie,” “bo pięcioro rąk/Chwyta mi moje pióro/I każe pisać, ich dzieje, Dzieje ich życia i śmierci (five hands/Seize my pen and order me to write/The story of their lives and deaths)”²⁸⁰; he is urged by an outside force to take up his pen, whereas Hernández voluntarily lends his voice to a cause he deems worthy of a fight. However, Hernández also bemoans his role as the nightingale whose duty it is to sing of the dead, “cuanto a penas, cuanto a pobres, cuanto a tierra se refiere (of pain and poverty and everything of the earth),” but he feels a patriotic obligation to Spain to fulfill this charge. Miłosz’s obligation, however, is simply to the dead, and it is one he cannot escape. He, too, draws a voice from earth, catching thoughts from atop St. John’s Cathedral on the wind scattering dust and rubble. Poland’s grief has become absorbed by the terrain and atmosphere, where the wind carries a song of suffering. Similarly, last line of Hernández’s fourth stanza, “cuanto a tierra se refiere,” is critical in its reference, again, to the earth. Hernández sings of suffering embedded in the earth beneath him, aptly recognizing that war is inhumane but not inhuman; it is a despicable invention of men born out of the earth, a fact humanity still grapples with it in reflecting upon the crimes of war, especially in the twentieth century.

Hernández’s abandonment of lyric and meter is shoved into view in the fifth stanza, in which he describes “el pueblo (the people),” those caught in the hurricane of violence that befell Spain, as “desnudo y sin que comer (stripped and with nothing to cover themselves, hungry and with nothing to eat);” we see humanity naked and starving, and Hernández’s words themselves stripped to bare bones much like the exploration of Różewicz’s poetry in the previous chapter.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ It is important to note that Genoways’ translation of this stanza is more robust in its choice of words and does not necessarily encapsulate or capture the starkness and brevity Hernández is trying to convey. I argue that a more

The subsequent stanza is, at last, the identification of the body as the site of trauma. Not only do we begin the poem with a heap of corpses that have undoubtedly been brutalized, but in the seventh stanza we arrive at a juncture where the body has come completely undone, reduced to scraps and entrails that must be gathered by those who fight without guns. Hernández calls upon his people,

mientras que te queden puños,
uñas, saliva, y te queden
corazón, entrañas, tripas,
cosas de varón y dientes.
Bravo como el viento bravo,
Leve como el aire leve,
asesina el que asesina,

as long as you have fists
fingernails, saliva, and you have
heart, entrails, guts,
testicles and teeth.
Wild as the wild wind,
gentle as the gentle air,
kill those who kill,

He does not beckon a fight with parts of the body we might assume, e.g. feet, arms, legs, etc., but with the parts that make up the individual and that are distinct to each living being. Fingernails, saliva, heart, guts, teeth, all of these parts, disembodied and disjointed as in the previous stanzas, are fitted to the individual and allow him/her to be identified. These are the weapons with which “el pueblo” must fight for Spain. Hernández finds an interesting balance between the collective mass and the individual fighter; in the lines just before the aforementioned passage, he writes,

Aunque le faltan las armas,
pueblo de cien mil poderes,
no desfallezcan tus huesos,

Even if you have no weapons,
people of one hundred thousand strengths

accurate translation would be, “naked with nothing to eat,” which is more direct and bereft of poetic sensibility. There is no flowery or adorned way to convey starvation and desperation in the context of the Spanish Civil War.

don't let your bones thin;

Hernández acknowledges the strength of the collective (“pueblo de cien mil poderes”) derived from the participation of the individual and all of his respective parts. In the concluding lines of this stanza, he refers to la paz de tu corazón, el vientre, la espalda, la cara, and el pecho (the peace of your heart, womb, back, face, and chest), all without a unified form. He never speaks of the living breathing body in its entirety, only its fragments, as if a body cannot exist as a whole in war-torn Spain.

The last two stanzas revert back to the voice of the poet, stirring the masses and mourning for a people lost to state-sanctioned violence at the hands of Franco. We return to the Spanish equal of Miłosz's ritual mourner who decries,

Canto con las voz de luto,
pueblo de mí, por tus héroes:

I sing in grief's voice,
my people, for your heroes:

The same voice that climbed the mountain in the second stanza to descend like thunder sings with the people's grief in the penultimate stanza, drawing all of the disparate body parts from the previous stanza back to some collective entity that is discernable as “yours and mine.” He speaks of “tu pensamiento y mi frente,/tu corazón y mi sangre,/tu dolor y mis laurels (your thoughts and my mind,/your heart and my blood,/your pain and my laurels),” each of “yours” dependent on one of “mine” (the narrator's), a song of unity. In the final lines of the last stanza, he recommits himself to the cause of defending Spain, declaring,

Aquí estoy para vivir
mientras el alma me suene
y aquí estoy para morir
cuando la hora me llegue

I am here to live

While the soul permits,
And here to die,
When the hour arrives,

Unlike Miłosz who is unsure of how to “live in this country/Where foot knocks against/The unburied bones of kin,” and who thinks “It’s madness to live without joy/And to repeat to the dead.../Only the two salvaged words:/Truth and justice,” Hernández demonstrates a still-fervent passion for life and hunger to let his soul linger until he is called to death, which he indicates is beyond his control in the use of the phrase “cuando la hora me llegue (when the hour arrives).” He sings in a voice that descends like thunder what Miłosz chokes out in a whisper. Sitting upon the dead (Hernández) and ruins of St. John’s Cathedral (Miłosz), both poets commit themselves to tell the story of their countries, razed to the ground and battered, whether they do so with gusto or reticence. One is willing and the other is loath to mobilize against the destruction of their motherlands pregnant with mountains of corpses, but they have both been summoned as poets of witness to write the history of wars that would be buried for decades after. Their grief is quite different, but they both come to their pens as ritual mourners with a nightingale’s song.

“y olía mi corazón a cementerio/and my heart smelled like a cemetery”: An Elegy for Justice

While Franco’s dictatorship was oppressive in its censorship of national historical memory, it did not forbid the writing of poetry of witness entirely. Germán Labrador Méndez clarifies, “In 1981, what *could not be seen* could nevertheless be read; thirty years earlier, however, publishing such content was dangerously impossible. ...during Francoism...the limits of decorum were narrower but the visibility of a book of poems was also greater.”²⁸¹ Voices like that of Miguel Hernández echoed cautiously throughout the postwar years with a particular focus

²⁸¹ Labrador Méndez, Germán, “Poets of the Dead Society,” 230.

on not only the physical body, but the grave. Poets like Rafael Alberti, Luis Pimentel, Jose Luis Hidalgo, and many others depicted “crypto-representations of the graves of the war” in which “they articulated a space of denunciation and memory in which many poets would participate.”²⁸² Labrador Méndez alludes to the fragments that I crystallize in the form of *crypto-memory*: “crypto-representations” built on platforms that call for poetic interrogations of representations of memory. The memory that accompanied victims of dictatorial regimes to their graves is pooling like blood to the surface, unable to be contained by the soil it choked on for decades. One such poet that dove boldly into the graves in his work is Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, who writes poignantly about the sentences and execution by firing squad of a seventeen-year old boy in “Pequeña elegía a Manolo Rueda (A Small Elegy for Manolo Rueda)” in 1961.

The title of the poem itself is suggestive of the loss of youth in its use of the diminutive descriptor “pequeña,” which is often used as a term of endearment in the Spanish language. The elegy itself is “small” in a mournfully endearing way; after all, Manolo Rueda had not lived much of his life before his death at seventeen, so it seems appropriate that only a “little” or “small elegy” could serve as his commemoration. The opening lines are illustrative of Chapter 2’s discussion of regional memory differences. Carriedo begins,

Por aquí dicen que apareció su cadáver
y olía mi corazón a cementerio.²⁸³

Around here they say that his corpse appeared
and my heart smelled like a cemetery.²⁸⁴

“Por aquí dicen que (Around here they say)” implies a certain anonymity and sense of

²⁸² Ibid., 235.

²⁸³ Carriedo, Gabino-Alejandro, “Pequeña elegía a Manolo Rueda,” in *Poesia* (Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén, 2006), 382.

²⁸⁴ Translation by Alexandra van Doren.

displacement, as the reader does not know who “they” are and where “around here” might be. One can only deduce that there is a tone of familiarity that is key to the narrator’s experience, and perhaps he will reveal *who* is doing the saying and *where* we find ourselves at the beginning of the poem. The corpse that appears is one that we know very little about just yet, but the narrator reanimates him, presumably Manolo Rueda, in the very first line; Rueda has a sense of restored agency in his ability to appear before the narrator, or so “they say.” The second line is incredibly visceral in its use of the olfactory, as the reader moves through the rest of the poem with the stench of death in his/her nose. Once again, we encounter the cemetery is a site of mourning and confrontation, as denoted in Chapters 1 and 2, creating a space in which the narrator and Rueda’s corpse encounter each other for the first time. The narrator’s heart emits a scent that evokes images of a grave, implying that the living have internalized the dead as the organ responsible for the flow of blood through the narrator’s physical body is steeped in the smell of rot and decay. A cemetery is often a holy or anointed place, but for a poet of the Spanish Civil War, “[I]t seems that where some see God, others see mass graves.”²⁸⁵ Animate bodies, too, have absorbed death in their organs.

The second stanza gives some indication of where “around here” might be as the narrator reveals that there are something like marshlands in the distance.

Bajo las charcas húmedas en la distancia
se pusieron las ranas a llorar.

Under the humid ponds in the distance
they put frogs to cry.

The narrator’s second reference to “they” is still ambiguous, but the use of environmental elements that evoke a sense of dampness conducive to rotting (“humid ponds”) and the frogs that

²⁸⁵ Labrador Méndez, Germán. “Poets of the Dead Society,” 243.

cry suggest that along with the narrator, even the natural world mourns the dead. In this poem, just breathing is traumatic; all of the elements, including the air, have been contaminated or infected with death. Carriedo reveals that it is just before dawn

...y el aire tenia
una tristeza tragica, inifinita,
una tristeza como de pozo

...and the air had
A tragic, infinite sadness
A sadness like a well

We see yet another reference to a vessel for water (“pozo/well”), which Carriedo employs as a metaphor for both the infinite and bottomless nature of the despair and sadness he describes, and also drowning, likely in sorrow. These lines circle back to the opening lines of the stanza in which the frogs are placed “under” the humid ponds. The frogs, too, are consumed by the pond’s water, which they fill with their own tears as well. The final lines of the second stanza expand upon the water imagery: “como de mar que se retira (like the sea that retreats),” “como de ruina/que se hunde (like a ruin that sinks).” The repetition of water can certainly be read as an archetypal theme of the desire for cleansing, as we have seen previously in reference to the theme of floods in *Poklosie* or the scrubbing of “cobijas infectadas” in *Pa negre*. However, I propose that Carriedo may be utilizing the theme of water to liken the ponds, tears, well, sea, etc. to the waters of Lethe. In Greek mythology, the river Lethe flowed through the underworld and had an amnesiac effect on all those who drank from it. One sip of water from this river and one’s memory was jetted into oblivion. Carriedo is struggling in Francoist Spain to combat the governmentally-imposed willful forgetfulness of the Spanish Civil War, particularly the crimes enacted against the Republican victims. In this poem, he seems to be doing the very same as “infinite sadness” and tears overtake the natural world and the narrator. The stanza concludes

with locating the origin of this tragic sadness in a “corazón que ya no crece (heart that no longer grows).” The heart that smells like a cemetery cannot grow, unable to swell and deflate with the ebb and flow of blood circulating through its chambers, and it appears to have died with the victim the narrator is mourning. The narrator’s body is still living, but the heart has arrested.

The third stanza opens with an image of “las rosas mojadas/que bien olían, Dios (wet roses/how good they smelled, God),” again dampening the natural world with the waters of forgetting. For a moment, the scent of the roses, almost palpable to the reader, masks the cemetery-smell, yet the roses are still tainted, wet with the waters of forgetting. Additionally, the only mention of God in this poem occurs in an instance of remembering a pleasant sensory experience that takes the reader and narrator temporarily out of the graveyard. God is not present among the dead. The culmination of this stanza depicts the only instance of fire in all of the poem’s elemental references (earth and grave, sadness and air) as the narrator instructs us that “La geografía se iba quemando/al tempo que los muebles y las horas (The geography was burning/at the time of the furniture and hours).” The use of the term “geografía” as opposed to “pais (country)” or “ciudad (city)” or “tierra (earth)” is peculiar, but it denotes that what was consumed by fire was only the physical features of the environment around the narrator rather than the country which implies political systems, city which implies populations, or earth which implies tangible elements like the soil used to cover the mass graves. Essentially, the elemental properties of Spain were burning, but not its content.

Emerging from the fire, the fourth stanza moves into a scene of execution; the fury this evokes in the narrator and his unnamed compatriots is substantial. He begins with what appears to be a shooting,

Y la sangre nos golpeaba las sienes,
y la vergüenza nos subía a las mejillas,

y la rabia a los puños,
pero todo era inútil.

And the blood hit our temples,
and shame rose on our cheeks,
and rage at the fists,
but everything was useless.

"Y la sangre nos golpeaba las sienes (And the blood hits our temples)," almost as if the blood were a weapon itself, even though it was drawn out of the bodies of the victims by rifles. The narrator has not been shot, but the way in which he and the unnamed others are sullied by the blood implies they witnessed an execution, likely Rueda's, and were the recipients of the blood splatter. Carriedo's intentionality in the use of "golpeaba" implies that the blood is assaulting the witnesses, who are then overtaken with shame. The following lines paint an image of yet another fragmented and disjointed body, with each part responsible for carrying a piece of witnessing. The temples carry the blood, the cheeks carry the shame of witnessing death, and the fists are responsible for carrying rage. Not only do we see echoes of Hernández in Carriedo's call to action using fists as weapons but also in Carriedo's resignation that "todo era inútil (everything was useless)." Unlike Hernández, Carriedo is not resolute in his certainty that resistance is a worthwhile endeavor. Hernández considers his duty as a nightingale of the dead leading the charge against Franco's army

...cantar y repitir
a quien escucharme debe
cuanto a penas, cuanto a pobres
cuanto a tierra se refiere.

...to sing and to repeat
to those who must hear me
everything of pain, everything of poverty,
everything of earth,

but Carriedo's narrator carries rage in his fist and in the same breath recognizes that "everything

was useless.” Labrador Méndez weighs in on the memory work Carrido is performing in depicting the “experience of resistance like that of the poets of the graves,” which he claims

facilitates understanding of the fundamental *agency* that exists in the work of carrying a memory, resisting oblivion, and refusing to express one’s own identity through the vertical frameworks of the state, employing one’s denied and dispossessed condition as a survivor as a space of enunciation and resubjectification.”²⁸⁶

After witnessing the execution, the narrator carries resistance in one hand and defeat in the other.

The refrain of defeat carries into the fifth stanza: “Pero todo era inútil.” The narrator justifies his despair over the futility of resisting Francoist violence with both rage and shame in the following lines. Carrido continues,

Pero todo era inútil, porque
debajo de la tumba que nadie sabe
hoy los huesos de muchos se juntan con los tuyos

But everything was useless, because
under the grave that no one knows
today the bones of many join with yours.

The narrator meditates on the purposelessness of defiance in the face of shooting squadrons that executed Rueda and thousands more. “[d]ebajo de la tumba que nadie sabe (under the grave that no one knows),” lie thousands of bones in anonymity and oblivion. This is the first instance of the narrator using the second-person address in his revelation that “hoy (today)” is a day of rupture. Today, “los huesos de muchos se juntan con los tuyos.” What is striking about Carrido’s description of bones melding with one another is that based on the time-marker “hoy,” these are presumably new bodies hurriedly packed into a mass grave, yet they are not described as bodies or even corpses, only bones. It is as if the process of decomposition and *desmemoria* begins the moment the trigger is pulled and bodies cease to exist as human beings, only as skeletons. The grave is freshly fettered with “los huesos” to mix with “los tuyos,” though

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 244.

it is unclear if this is an attempt to address Rueda directly after the narrator witnesses an execution or if Carriedo is reaching out to the reader to implicate us in the travesty that, for him, is all-consuming. The bodies are entering the process of being swallowed by the grave and drowning in forgetting.

In the following lines, the narrator grapples with the realization that the impossible has become a new and twisted normal, the state of exception has become the status quo. He ruminates, “Parecía imposible, cosa de broma, pero ahí está (It seemed impossible, something of a joke, but there it is).” The initial encounter with disbelief at the degree to which a wave of barbarity can rattle the shores of civilization is an experience shared not only by the poets of war, but by their audiences as well. The reality of the existence of mass graves begins to settle in the narrator as he returns to the second-person address, this time clearly speaking to Rueda, who is now only bone fragments. The narrator professes,

...pero ahí está
tu calavera que todavía se horroriza.
Ahí está tu podredumbre para testimoniarlo,
tu juventud tronchada preuntando razones,
tu vivo idioma permanente
pidiendo un puesto en las tribunas.

...but there it is
your skull still horrified.
There is your rot to testify to it
your youth truncated asking for reasons
your living permanent language
asking for a position in the stands.

The narrator's traumatic confrontation with the skull of Rueda's brutalized body is a familiar scene. It is only when Franek digs up the first skull buried under the foundation of his family's old home in *Poklosie* that he begins to grasp the weight of the history of murder beneath his feet. He holds the skull in his hands, the only remnants of a Jewish victim of the Jedwabne massacre,

and immediately begins heaving, sick from this discovery. The terror in Carriedo's poem, however, is not imbued in the narrator or witness, but in Rueda's skull "que todavía se horroriza (that is still horrified)." The repetition of the appearance of unearthing skulls in particular carries echoes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which Hamlet unearths the skull of poor Yorick. The allusion to classical drama amidst piles of skeletal remains illustrates the tension between culture and barbarism and the poet or director's struggle to reconcile the simultaneous existence of both.

The closing lines of this last stanza begin to take on the structure of a trial, or a plea for judicial action. It is not Rueda's skull that delivers the testimony, but the rot. The disjointed body cannot plead for justice, but the evidence of violence carved into its bones certainly can. The limits of the agency Rueda was given in the opening line of the poem are delineated here: his "juventud tronchada preuntando razones (truncated youth asking for reasons)," rather than his corpse or a disembodied voice. His youth, like the bodies of the victims, has been violated, chopped down at the knees, and is left begging for answers. Carriedo, through the narrator's voice, seems to be asking for answers, but what answers are there for the question of how young men and women, practically still children at seventeen years old, could be justifiably murdered en masse? It is only a living and permanent language that can continue to ask these pressing questions and request "un puesto en las tribunas (a position in the stands)." The body enters the process of decomposition the moment it ceases to be animate, but language is permanent and living. Language can essentially retain an element of life taken from the victims of the executions, which Carriedo uses to cement the experience of the victims in his living poetry. In dedicating an elegy to an "enemy of the state" in Francoist Spain, Carriedo is granting Rueda as much of tribunal as was possible in 1961.

The final stanza is brief, but resolute in its commemoration of Rueda. Carriedo carries the intertwined threads of water and forgetting through the end of the elegy. He writes,

El agua rueda al mar, y los amigos
de la escuela te colocamos flores
sobre el jardín de nuestros juegos
que una mañana se bañó de pólvora.

Water rolls to the sea, and friends
from school put for you flowers
on the garden of our games
that one morning he bathed in gunpowder.

The water in the opening line is “rolling” (a play on the victim’s name and the verb “rueda”) out to sea rather than rolling in to drown or erase historical memory. For the first and only time, we are left with a scene untainted by dampness and rot in “el jardín de nuestros juegos (the garden of our games),” where Rueda’s schoolmates leave flowers on the day of his death. Carriedo utilizes this stanza to drive home the loss of youth and innocence in war, reiterating that Rueda was young enough to have schoolmates with whom he played games, who have now taken up their mantles as mourners by decorating their garden with flowers to commemorate their loss. What is particularly striking about this image is that Rueda’s body can receive neither a proper burial nor commemoration of any sort because his bones are lost in the chaos and violent confusion of an unmarked mass grave, prompting his friends to leave flowers in a familiar and playful garden. The reality is that the flowers, and Rueda’s memory, are doomed to wilt. The poem’s concluding line reverts back to the third-person narrator, as in the first line, describing Rueda’s execution as the morning “se bañó de pólvora (he bathed in gunpowder).” This switch in narration suggests that the corpse that appeared at the beginning of the poem has disappeared, leaving only the narrator and audience to witness Rueda bathing in gunpowder, a stirring metaphor in which water imagery returns to carry his body and memory away after the firing squad has let loose the

gunpowder. Carriedo has fulfilled what Labrador Méndez describes as an “opening up of a new cycle of memory” that

enables people today to learn to recognize themselves as recipients of the futures imagined by old verses, to understand such verses as a kind of *inheritance waiting for an inheritor*, and to satisfy—towards one’s own pleasure or interest—the imperious need for posterity that marks all of these texts.²⁸⁷

Carriedo leaves us in a state of inertia, but permeated with the memory of Rueda’s execution. We are now, in essence, new inheritors of stories from the past projected into the future, carrying “living permanent language” in our fists.

Unearthing Legacies of Shame: The Fate of las Fantasías de *La nación singular*

The project of *desmemoria* that began with the eradication of “rojos” in Spain in the 1930s and persisted throughout the years of *Transición* has been subverted in part by the efforts of poets of the graves. In constructing poetry that demands an inheritor of bodies and memories, it becomes impossible to evade Rueda’s call for “un puesto en las tribunas” forever. The descendants of the victims of the war have grown increasingly restless, particularly because they are the actual inheritors of their family’s history, yet they have been forbidden from knowing the fates of their family members during the war or even where their relatives may be buried. The grandchildren of the victims are like Rueda’s schoolmates, unable to mourn over the physical bodies, forced to settle for leaving flowers in a garden.

The foundation of Spain’s transition to democracy, built upon the practice of disremembering, is inevitably bound to be shaken by the recent and continual excavations of Franco’s mass graves. Spain’s topography is beginning to come undone, no longer able to conceal that it has been concealing mountains of corpses for decades. As keepers of the legacy

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 231.

below ground, mass graves themselves are not passive actors submitting to exhumations, but as Ferrandiz asserts, “are instead complex spatial processes that have gradually been ‘impregnated’ with ‘successive presents’ (Iniesta 2009).”²⁸⁸ The problem this poses for Spanish democracy as it stands is the foreseeable destabilization and disruption of memory practices, including historical revisionism, which in turn affect political and cultural systems. In her book *La nación singular*, Professor Elena Delgado puts into context the term “consensus” as it has come to be understood in Spanish democracy, and the foundation upon which it is built. She claims, “En el caso español, la expresión ‘democracia de consenso’ se ajusta perfectamente al ideal político democrático consolidado con la mitificada Transición, que propugnaba, ante todo, una equivalencia entre la normalidad democrática y la unidad y estabilidad del país. [In the case of Spain, the expression ‘consensus democracy’ perfectly fits the ideal of political democracy consolidated with the mythic *Transición*, which advocated, above all, for an equivalence between democratic normality and the unity and stability of the country.]”²⁸⁹ Pedro Sánchez’s support of the calls to disinter the victims in Franco’s mass graves will undoubtedly require Spain to submit its concept of democratic consensus for revision.

The obsession with normalization in Spain without having ever fully acknowledged the scale and scope of the crimes of the Spanish Civil War seems flawed. Where Nazi Germany took painstaking efforts to rationalize the destruction of European Jewry by employing pseudoscience, Franco’s executioners did not take the same steps to normalize the barbarism of the massacres they committed. Rather, the “normalidad” stemmed “from writing on the Spanish Civil War to depict it as a conflict between two more or less equal sides.”²⁹⁰ There was and is nothing “normal,”

²⁸⁸ Ferrándiz, “Afterlives,” 28.

²⁸⁹ Delgado, Luisa Elena, *La nación singular: fantasías de la normalidad democrática española (1996–2011)* (Siglo XXI, 2014), 18.

²⁹⁰ Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, xii.

about the violence that tore Spain in two in the 1930s, yet their subsequent and current political practices have continued with a “business as usual” attitude that can no longer be sustained.

Delgado defines “la idea de la España democrática (idea of democratic Spain)” as

inseparable de los conceptos de ‘normalización’ y ‘normalidad,’ términos ubicuos que se utilizaban de muy distinta forma y con muy distintos fines: en relación a la política del gobierno, por supuesto, pero también de varias comunidades autónomas que llevaron a cabo sus propios procesos de normalización política y cultural; en relación a ciertos tipos de creación literaria o de comportamiento social. [inseparable from the concepts of ‘normalization’ and ‘normality,’ ubiquitous terms that were used in very different ways and with very different purposes: in relation to government policy, of course, but also of several autonomous communities that carried out their own political and cultural normalization processes; in relation to certain types of literary creation or social behavior.]²⁹¹

While it is not yet possible to predict the shape Spanish democracy will take as the excavations continue, it is reasonable to assume that Spain’s attachment to *consenso* and “normalización” may begin to deteriorate. We have literature and film, in large part, to thank for the support of demands for juridical action in response to crimes that have gone uninvestigated and unprosecuted for the better part of a century. This hopeful progress towards some kind of historical rectification and restitution of memory for victims of Franco’s regime will unquestionably be painful, but it is long past due. Spain’s willingness, reticent though it is, to be with the dead suggests that the first step towards atonement and repair is to sit with the skeletons of the past and acknowledge their existence in the present. If directors, writers, artists, and activists continue to demand political recognition of the dead in Poland, perhaps it too will arrive at a historical moment in which it can confront the corners of its history that for now live in obscurity. As Robert Pogue Harrison avers, “Only the dead can grant us legitimacy. Left to

²⁹¹ Delgado, *La nación singular*, 19-20.

ourselves we are all bastards. In exchange for legitimacy, which humans need and brave more than anything else, we surrender ourselves to their dominion.”²⁹²

²⁹² Harrison, Robert Pogue, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), x.

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APPENDIX FOR MEMORIAL IMAGES



Image 1

van Doren, Alexandra. *Memorial to the Murdered Jews on the Danube*. July, 2015. Budapest, Hungary.



Image 2

van Doren, Alexandra. *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. December, 2013. Berlin, Germany.



Image 3

van Doren, Alexandra. *Memorial to the Fallen Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* and POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. June, 2015. Warsaw, Poland.